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ABSTRACT

This study examines the Lao Hmong, an Indochinese refugee group that has resettled in the Denver-Boulder, Colorado, area. Characteristics examined are the following: (1) migration; (2) location; (3) housing; (4) acculturation; and (5) life satisfaction. An extensive literature review discusses the history, ethnography, and culture of the Hmong in Laos and in the United States. A survey was administered to a sample of 27 Hmong adults. Interviews were conducted either at the respondents' work places or in their homes, with an English-Hmong translator present. Findings suggest the following: (1) the Denver-Boulder Hmong community may be better employed and less welfare dependent than other Hmong communities; (2) residential clustering appears to be due more to economic constraints than to a desire to reside in ethnic enclaves; (3) respondents seem to be satisfied with their lives in the Denver-Boulder area, and more Hmong may be expected to migrate to the area; (4) respondents in the 30- to 39-year age group appear to have the most difficulties in adjustment; (5) the Hmong are at a point in the acculturation process where they wish to take advantage of educational funding, but few such opportunities now exist. Three tables include definitions of the study variables, subpopulations of the respondents, and values assigned to educational levels attained by the respondents. A map, five photographs of Hmong embroidery, and statistical data are included in eight figures. An extensive list of references, and a supplementary bibliography are included. The appendices include a copy of the survey questionnaire, and 13 tables of statistical data. (FMW)

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# THE DENVER-BOULDER HMONG: A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE ACCULTURATION AND SATISFACTION OF AN INDOCHINESE REFUGEE COMMUNITY

by

KRISTEN L. MONZEL

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by

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The Denver-Boulder Hmong: A Geographical Perspective
on the Acculturation and Satisfaction of an
Indochinese Refugee Community

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Morrow-Jones

This study is an initial examination of one Indochinese ethnic group, the Lao Hmong, in the Denver-Boulder, Colorado area. Their migration, location, housing, acculturation, and satisfaction characteristics are examined from a spatial viewpoint.

A survey developed to collect information on these topics, was administered to a sample of twenty-seven Hmong living in the Denver-Boulder area. Respondents gave interviews at their convenience in their homes or workplaces, with an English-Hmong translator present.

The research suggests the following:

1. This Hmong community may be better employed and less welfare dependent than other Hmong communities studied in recent years.
2. The residential clustering of the respondents appears to be due more to economic contraints than to a desire to reside in ethnic enclaves.
3. The Denver-Boulder Hmong community seems to be satisfied with their lives and the area, and more Hmong

may be expected to migrate to the area in the near future.

4. Those respondents in the thirty to thirty-nine age group appear to have more difficulties in adjustment than do those either younger or older.

5. The Hmong were not ready to adjust to the United States when educational funding was available. Now that they are in a position to make better use of such funding, few opportunities exist.

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# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

> Unlike old soldiers who simply fade away, the problems that they help create seemingly linger with us forever . . . . Throughout history, in the aftermath of wars, political upheavals and even natural disasters . . . . massive numbers of people are displaced from their homes and forced to wander the world in search of the most basic necessities (Pielke, 1979, p. 6).

Refugees are not a new phenomenon in the United States. Thirty-two thousand Hungarian refugees were resettled in the United States in 1956. Nearly four hundred and fifty thousand Cubans arrived in 1962. In all, one and one half million refugees were admitted to the U.S. between 1945 and 1971 (Norris, 1980).

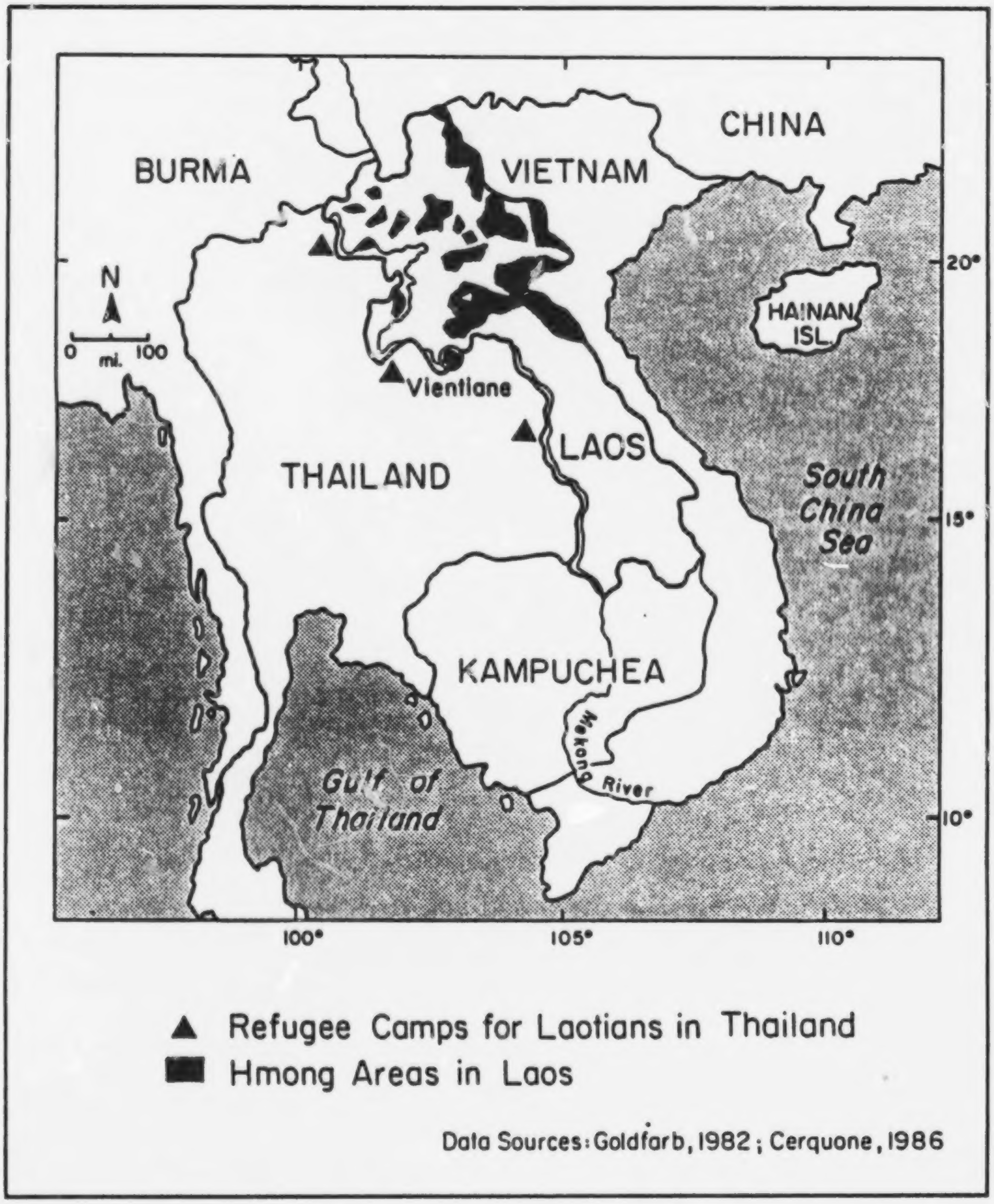
Since the United States' withdrawal from Indochina in the mid-1970's over seven hundred thousand Indochinese have been granted refuge in the United States (Strand and Jones, 1985). In comparison to the aforementioned earlier Western refugees, the Indochinese are less educated and less likely to come with transferable skills. Cultural differences and the need for adjustments are more pronounced.

The purpose of this study is to examine the satisfaction, migration, acculturation, and residential clustering of one Indochinese ethnic group, the Lao Hmong, in the Denver-Boulder, Colorado area. The Hmong came to the United States as the least educated and least Western of the Indochinese ethnic groups, and have been relatively less "successful" in the United States (Strouse, 1985).

## The Hmong

The Hmong, people from the mountainous regions of Indochina, were more isolated from Western contact and urbanization than were other ethnic groups in Southeast Asia. Best known for their fierce independence, the Hmong practiced a form of swidden (slash and burn) agriculture in which they raised subsistence crops such as mountain rice and vegetables, and cash crops, such as opium (Geddes, 1976; Yang, 1982).

Many Lao Hmong were employed by the Central Intelligence Agency during the Indochinese Wars, and a large number fled Laos for fear of reprisals after the communist take-over in 1975. Many died in the jungle during escape attempts. Other Hmong remained in Laos, and there are conflicting accounts of their treatment, ranging from being left in relative peace (Cooper, 1986) to execution (Cerquone, 1986; Stuart-Fox, 1982). Thousands fled to Thai refugee camps across the Mekong River from Laos (see map, Figure 1), from which many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Vientiane
LAOS
THAILAND
South China Sea
15°
KAMPUCHEA
Mekong River
Gulf of Thailand
10°
100°
105°
110°
▲ Refugee Camps for Laotians in Thailand
■ Hmong Areas in Laos

Data Sources: Goldfarb, 1982; Cerquone, 1986

Figure 1. Hmong areas in Laos and Thai refugee camps.

sought refuge in such developed countries as the United States, France, Australia, and Canada.

United States refugee resettlement programs, working under time and monetary constraints, dispersed the Indochinese across the country to wherever sponsors could be located. Within a short time, however, sponsors and refugee support agencies were surprised and exasperated to discover that the refugees were redistributing themselves by migrating to areas where they had kin, where they perceived that social services (such as English and vocational training) would be better provided, where they envisioned that they would find decent jobs, and where they thought they would be less discriminated against (Thao, 1982). The Hmong, in particular, were soon clustered in areas such as Santa Ana, California; Minneapolis-St. Paul, Minnesota; Providence, Rhode Island; Madison, Wisconsin; and Denver-Boulder, Colorado.

## Research Problem

In the last five years, much has been written on the Hmong in the United States from social service and anthropological viewpoints. Although the secondary migrations have often been referred to as problematic from a social services aspect, few analyses have taken an ethnographic or geographic point of view. Many unanswered questions remain. For example, will the

Hmong continue to relocate at such a rapid rate, or will movement diminish as more find areas that are suitable to their needs? Have they been able to secure satisfactory levels of education, housing, and employment? Are they becoming acculturated enough to feel less alienated than earlier studies have indicated?

This study provides an initial investigation of adult Hmong refugees in the Denver-Boulder area with a view to addressing the above questions at a local scale. The survey was designed to explore Hmong employment, educational, household structure, housing, location, and acculturation characteristics. The resulting analysis was based on the responses given by the refugees of different ethnic sub-groups, sexes, age groups, and educational levels.

Because of the immediate need to deal with the initial problems of their resettlement, little has been done to aid our understanding of the Hmong and their satisfaction with their lives now that their most pressing needs have been met. The results of this study will be of use to the professionals who work with the Hmong refugees, to the American neighbors of this new minority group, and to the Hmong themselves as they to reach out to the community for greater understanding.

## Hypotheses

The situation of the Hmong refugees was expected to have improved only marginally since studies conducted in the early 1980s. While over the initial problems associated with "culture shock," many were expected to feel that their education, employment, and housing -- as well as their lives in general -- remained unsatisfactory.

Beyond owning a television set and utilizing some modern medical treatments, few were expected to have adopted American ways: many were expected to live with or near their extended families, and in crowded conditions (by American standards), to prefer to eat Hmong food, and to speak Hmong at home. Few were presumed to own homes or automobiles, have American friends or in-laws, or wish their children to marry Americans. Generational differences in responses were expected: younger Hmong might have found it easier to adapt. Many Hmong were expected to be considering a move to another Hmong community in the United States. Many were expected to wish that they could peacefully return to Laos.

## Definitions

Several words or phrases are used with specific meanings in this study. Some of these may not be immediately obvious, so the following definitions have been included.

### Hmong

A distinct ethnic group which occupies various mountainous areas in Southeast Asia and southern China and has sought refuge in various Western countries. They were a minority in Southeast Asia as they are in the United States. The Hmong who have sought refuge in the United States are from Laos, and are commonly distinquished by the term Lao Hmong.

### Indochina

The region of Southeast Asia encompassing the countries of Vietnam, Kampuchea, Laos, Thailand, Malaysia, and Burma (see Figure 1).

### Refugee

A person who is forced to flee to another area or country for political or economic reasons.

### Adult

For this study, interviews were sought only with those Hmong over the age of eighteen, or those who were younger but married.

### Sub-groups

Hmong sub-ethnic divisions that represent identifiable cultural and linguistic variations.

### Ethnography

The scientific description of individual cultures.

### Acculturation

The process or result of a minority group adopting the outward cultural and social patterns of the larger population, and the larger groups adaptation and acceptance of some of the mores and behaviors of the minority group.

### Assimilation

The process or result of individual or group ethnic changes in attitudes and beliefs so that they become more similar to the larger population.

### Acculturation value

For this study, an index derived from responses regarding individual life style.

## Delimitations of the Study

1. The population examined for this study was confined to adult Lao Hmong refugees living in the Denver-Boulder area of Colorado.
2. The sample was selected from the population of Hmong with listed telephone numbers.
3. Twenty-seven Hmong adults, nineteen men and eight women, were interviewed for the study.

4. Data for each respondent was collected during one oral interview session. No follow-up interviews were conducted.

5. Survey questions were limited to personal demographic information, employment, education, household structure, housing, location, and acculturation characteristics.

6. The opinions and/or feelings of the respondents about their life situations were considered to be the most valid and reliable source of information on the topic.

## Limitations of the Study

1. The conclusions drawn are valid only for the population studied, and are not meant to be extrapolated to other refugee groups or to other Hmong communities.

2. The study was made more difficult by the respondents' lack of familiarity with survey techniques, by their limited previous social encounters with Americans, and by their limited formal education.

3. Problems inherent in translation from one language to another, and in the perceptual understanding of the individuals involved were further limitations.

4. Cultural differences between the researcher and the respondents existed, and limited their ability to understand each other. An English-Hmong translator attended each interview to help minimize language and

cultural barriers between the researcher and the respondents.

## Outline of the Thesis

In Chapter II, pertinent literature is reviewed. The history of the Hmong, their traditional culture in Indochina, and their reasons for seeking refuge are discussed in the section "The Hmong in Laos." "The Hmong in the United States" examines the adjustments that they've had to make in this country.

The methodology of the study is explained in Chapter III. Various sections deal with the construction of the survey questions, interviews with experts on refugees, Hmong translation, revisions of the survey questions, sample selection, data collection, data processing, and analysis.

The data are presented, analyzed, and discussed in Chapter IV. Additionally, case studies of individual respondents are presented to allow the reader a glimpse into real Hmong lives, rather than presenting a composite, or "average Hmong."

The final part, Chapter V, offers conclusions reached through the analysis of the data, and incidental findings from the interviews. Recommendations for further research on the Hmong are made, and implications and recommendations for aid agencies are discussed.

# CHAPTER II

# LITERATURE REVIEW

Since most Americans know little about the origins of the Hmong, their culture, or current problems, this chapter examines the literature describing the Hmong way of life in Laos and in the United States. The background on the traditional Hmong culture and on the group's history is provided as a means of futhering understanding of their current problems in adjusting to life in the U.S.

## The Hmong in Laos

### History of the Hmong

The roots of the Hmong are unknown and the topic of much debate. Most scholars speculate that their ancestors migrated to China's fertile river valleys from the south or west thousands of years ago. This theory is supported by the strong affinities of their language to the Sino-Tibetan language group, especially Burman (Geddes, 1976).

Ethnic similarities in medicine and religion have been noted between the Hmong and native Americans, leading to speculation of common ancestry (Aylesworth, 1987). Some Hmong have suggested a connection between the terms Hmong and Mongol, while others have recalled legends of ancestors living in very cold climates (Bessac and Rainbolt, 1978).

The Hmong as an ethnic group were first referred to in Chinese history about 2700 B.C. They were probably forced from the fertile valleys into the mountainous areas by various Chinese ethnic groups as the competition for land increased (Geddes, 1976, Mottin, 1980).

The Chinese term "Miao" for the Hmong in ancient times may have meant "cat" and referred to the sound of their language, or, more likely, to a legendary association of the Hmong and the tiger. Mottin (1980) preferred the interpretation of the written Chinese character for "Miao" as representing "growing shoots" or "green harvest" referring to the Hmong as being agricultural or perhaps as culturally backward.

While the terms Miao and Meo (the Laotian corruption of the Chinese term) have been widely used in the literature, they hold the derogatory connotation of "barbarians." "Hmong," which means "free men", is the group's name for itself, and will therefore be used in this paper.

## Ethnography

The following sections on population, ethnic sub-groups, agriculture and economy, mobility, familial relationships, religion, and interactions with other groups offer the reader a background on the traditional Hmong life in Indochina. An understanding of their previous agrarian lifestyle is necessary to assess the traumatic changes which they experienced in their resettlement to the United States.

Population. There have been no real censuses done for the remote mountainous regions inhabited by the Hmong, therefore we have only a rough idea of their numbers for different places and times. The 1959 Chinese estimate of Hmong within their borders was 2,500,000, with over half residing in Guizhou (Kweichow) province, immediately north of the Laotian border (Geddes, 1976). At approximately the same time, about 300,000 were thought to reside in Laos (Stuart-Fox, 1982).

Official statistics (to be interpreted cautiously) place an additional 219,514 Hmong in Vietnam in 1960, and 58,000 in Thailand in 1970 (Mottin, 1980). Depending upon whose political ends were being served, estimates for Laos in 1978 ranged from 150,000 to 3.5 million (Stuart-Fox, 1982). Additional Hmong groups currently reside in Thailand, North Vietnam, and Burma, and they are also thought to be on Hainan Island in the South China Sea (Geddes, 1976).

*Ethnic Sub-groups*. There are approximately ten sub-groups of the Hmong, each commonly given a color name which probably refers to the dye used in their clothing. These various sub-groupings are widely distributed, but the literature reports that they have kept many of their differing traditions intact (see Geddes, 1976, for example).

Despite dialect and other cultural differences between the various sub-groups, the Hmong have a sense of being a unified ethnic group. This is perhaps best reflected by the fact that while the Hmong commonly marry outside of their sub-groups, there is no known record of an Asian Hmong ever marrying a non-Hmong. Since there are traditionally no political organizations wider than the village or village clusters, the unifying forces must be the non-political characteristics of language and culture. (Geddes, 1976, Strand and Jones, 1985).

*Agriculture and Economy*. Rice was the staple of the traditional Hmong diet in Laos, and corn was grown for fodder. Figure 2 is a photograph of a *pa 'ndao*, or Hmong embroidery, which depicts Hmong in Laos working in their rice and corn fields. A wide variety of vegetables, wild plants and animals, and livestock provided supplementary fare. Each household owned ten to thirty chickens, five to ten pigs, and often had

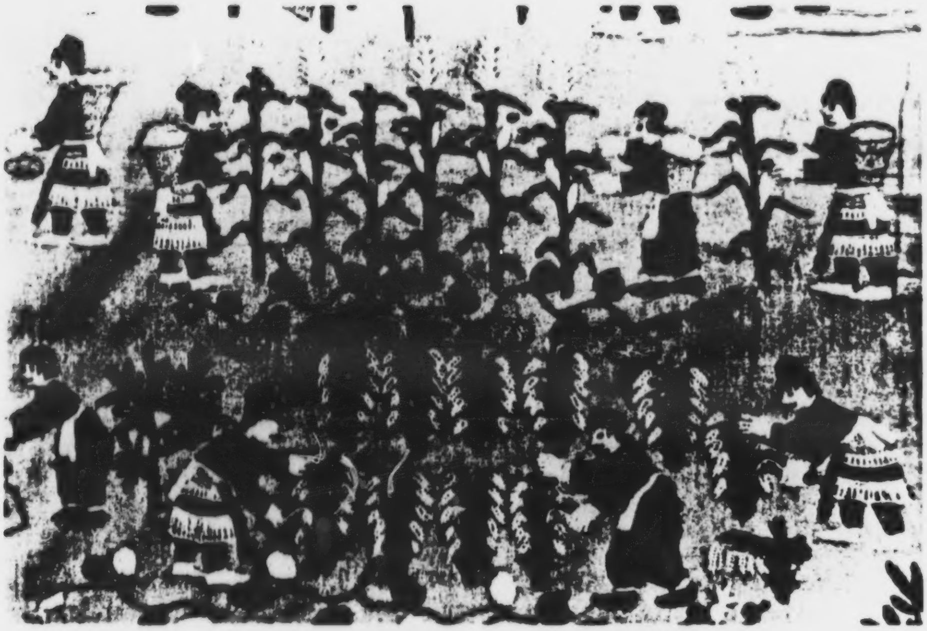

Figure 2. _Pa 'ndao_ of Hmong growing corn and rice.

horses, steers or buffalo (Yang, 1982).

The economic base of Lao Hmong society, at least in recent history, had been a form of swidden agriculture which was somewhat different from that practiced by other mountain peoples who rotated the use of their fields to allow for fallow time. Due in part to the type of cash crop produced by the Hmong, the opium poppy, fields were continually used until they no longer produced, then abandoned, and new fields were claimed from the jungle. Although other mountain ethnic groups inhabiting the same regions also grew poppies as a main cash crop, these other groups were more likely to have secondary cash crops than were the Hmong (Geddes, 1976). Many underlying influences on the structure of Hmong society stemmed from their economic reliance on the production of the opium poppy, as will be seen in the following sections.

It is important to note that the opium poppy is not indigenous to Southeast Asia, and was transmitted there from China in the 18th or 19th century after its international traffic grew in importance. Although the Hmong and other highland ethnic groups continue its production as a cash crop, they contend that it is used for its medicinal and relaxation properties, that few become addicted to the drug, and that they were unaware of its abuse by outsiders (Yang, 1982). Other sources, however, clearly state that some Hmong have intentionally addicted their field workers from other ethnic groups by paying them opium as wages (Kunstadter, 1979).

Mobility. In 1965, a Thai Government Survey estimated that over ninety percent of Hmong households had moved within a ten year period. These migration rates were higher than those for other hill tribes. There appears to be a direct relationship between high migration rates and the importance of opium to a groups' economy: the production of opium in a system of swidden agriculture is much more destructive to the nutrients in the soil than is the production of other crops (Geddes, 1976, Strand and Jones, 1985). Furthermore, Geddes (1976) suggests that this is the reason for the gradual migration of the Hmong southward into Indochina, and the northern mountainous regions of Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam where they have been residents for only perhaps the last one hundred years.

Further reasons for traditional Hmong mobility were listed by Nusit (1976). Villagers may have decided to move their village for the following reasons: the soil at the original site was exhausted; more land was needed for both poppies and rice, in case one of the crops failed; a move to a larger settlement would provide protection and more social contacts; relatives lived at the target settlement; or the old site was plagued by bad luck. Other reasons may have included that the earthen floors of the original dwellings were old and had accumulated too much rubbish and animal excreta; others from the original site had moved, and those who remained did not want to live in a small village; or government officials were less likely to know that they were growing poppies in a more remote area. As Nusit's list showed, there were many reasons for traditional Hmong mobility rates to be high.

Familial Relationships. Although the family unit of husband-wife, parents-children, and siblings (the nuclear famlily as we know it) is the primary form of traditional Hmong relationships in Laos (Geddes, 1976), the clan structure remains very important to their sense of identity. There are more than twenty clans among the Hmong, each comprised of the descendants of a common ancestor. All members of the clan are considered brothers and sisters, and all clans are exogamous, with the females moving to their husband's clan. The clan assures the individual Hmong of leadership, counsel, help and support: a Hmong cannot live a life isolated from family and clan without mental distress (Yang, 1982).

It may be useful to differentiate between clans and ethnic sub-groups. Whereas the clan is comprised of all the descendents of a common ancestor who share the same clan name, ethnic sub-groups (e.g. White Hmong, Green Hmong) are much broader cultural divisions and may encompass individuals from several clans. Clans are, however, typically made up of one sub-group, since married women and their children take on not only the husbands' clan, but also their husbands' ethnic sub-group.

The clan leader wields a great deal of power. Usually a member of the dominant (most numerous) clan in the village, he is selected by concensus on the basis of his individual qualities and abilities. His primary duties include arbitration of disputes and representation of the village in the larger Hmong community (Strand and Jones, 1985).

Traditionally, the Hmong have very large families: the larger the family, the better and more secure it is. In their patrilineal clan system, the husband is dominant and carries the clan name, while the wife has very little power and is expected to be devoted and respectful (Vang, 1979, Cooper, 1983).

After much negotiation and payment of a substantial bride price, a bride leaves her father's clan to become part of her husband's. Should her husband die, she remains with his clan, as do her children. Although it is a rare occurrence, should a woman leave her husband, her children must remain with her husband's clan and her father's clan must repay at least part of the bride price (Geddes, 1976, Nusit, 1976, Meredith and Rowe, 1982, and Cooper, 1983). Polygyny is common throughout Indochina, and a Hmong man may take several wives without the first wife's consent. Only the first wife, however, is officially married (Nusit, 1976, Cornell, 1983).

Hmong newlyweds in Laos live with the husband's family until they feel crowded, and then they build a new house close by. Hmong homes are made of wood planks, with earthen floors and thatched roofs, and are built on a hill facing downslope. They typically have one or two raised bedrooms and two stoves. One stove is used for heating the house and cooking fodder, and a smaller one is for the daily cooking (Nusit, 1976).

Religion. Livestock are raised not only for subsistence, but for sacrifice to placate or to receive the protection of spirits. Shamanism and supernatural beings are important to every aspect of Hmong life. Ceremonies include those for births and deaths, protection from evil, curing the sick, agriculture, and celebration. The rituals are associated with important social occasions which strengthen friendship and kinship ties (Nusit, 1976).

Perhaps due to their oral tradition, as well as to the lack of formal religious training, it is difficult to identify any common set of systematic beliefs. Nusit (1976), for example, asked a Hmong for details about souls. He said that he did not know enough, and referred Nusit to a relative. However, the relative also could not give him satisfactory answers, and he decided that no Hmong could.

Interactions with Other Groups. Although the Chinese have been traditional foes and overlords, the Indochinese Hmong respect them as customary teachers and regard the Chinese culture as a "father culture" (Geddes, 1976). Despite the fact that they had no documented written language of their own until recent decades and continue to be largely illiterate, the Hmong often carefully copy Chinese characters onto small silver plates which attach to their neck rings. They say they do not, however, feel inferior because of their illiteracy -- their legends say that they also once had a book, but that one day it got cooked along with their rice and they ate it. They therefore no longer needed the book because they had absorbed its knowledge (Geddes, 1976). Other Hmong legends say that the Chinese burned the ancient Hmong books and threatened death to anyone who wrote their old script (Bessac and Rainbolt, 1978).

The Hmong normally reside at elevations of 3000 feet and higher where the opium poppy grows best, and therefore occupy scattered mountain tops surrounded by the lower elevations and the more numerous ethnic groups. This spatial distribution has resulted in insecurity on both sides: the Hmong feel surrounded, divided, and outnumbered, while the others mistrust the Hmong in their midst. Since the Hmong must sell their opium to lowlanders, the other nearby ethnic groups usually act as middlemen in the opium trade, providing another reason for mutual distrust. For these reasons, the independent Hmong tend to select their neighbors' enemies as their allies (Stuart-Fox, 1982). This defensive maneuvering confused the role of the Hmong in the Indochinese War.

The Hmong society, based on clan solidarity and on a migratory crop economy, had little contact with outside peoples and westernization before the Second World War. Often the only contacts made with non-Hmong were with some other hill tribes, or with the middlemen in the opium trade. The continuing conflicts within Indochina have disrupted their traditional society so profoundly that it is doubtful that many Indochinese Hmong outside of the most remote mountainous regions continue their customary way of life.

Since the Hmong refugees who have resettled in the United States are predominantly from the mountains of Laos, it is their experiences which are considered in the remainder of this section.

## The Indochinese Conflicts

Shortly after the Japanese defeat in 1945, the Viet Minh and Pathet Lao took over the struggle against the French colonial presence in Indochina. While the Hmong initially attempted to remain neutral in this conflict (Yang, 1982), they were soon drawn into the vortex of the hostilities. While approximately one-third of the Lao Hmong did manage to remain neutral, another third joined with the Pathet Lao to overthrow the Royal Lao government, and the remaining third continued to support the Royal Lao government (Thee, 1973). This resistance to the Pathet Lao partially arose from attempts on the part of the Pathet Lao to seize the Hmong opium crops in order to finance their war effort (Stuart-Fox, 1982).

The Hmong who backed the Royal Lao government developed a reputation as ferocious and loyal guerrilla fighters, and were eventually sought out and employed by the United States Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) to report on Viet Minh and Pathet Lao movements in northern Laos and to aid in other covert activities. The American and Royal Lao militaries in turn apparently provided these Hmong with military machinery and air transportation for the marketing of their opium throughout Southeast Asia and the Far East (Thee, 1973).

Meanwhile, air and ground raids were conducted by the communist forces, often against all factions of the Hmong. Figures 3 and 4 show pa 'ndao depictions of Pathet Lao burning the Hmong rice harvest and Hmong fleeing a village under air attack. Thousands fled the mountains under these conditions and relocated in the lowland areas near the Royal Lao capital of Vientiane. Adjustment to life in this area was difficult: there was little arable land to farm, and few men available due to the war. Traditional clan and family patterns were disrupted, and housing consisted of small temporary huts (Armour, et al., 1981).

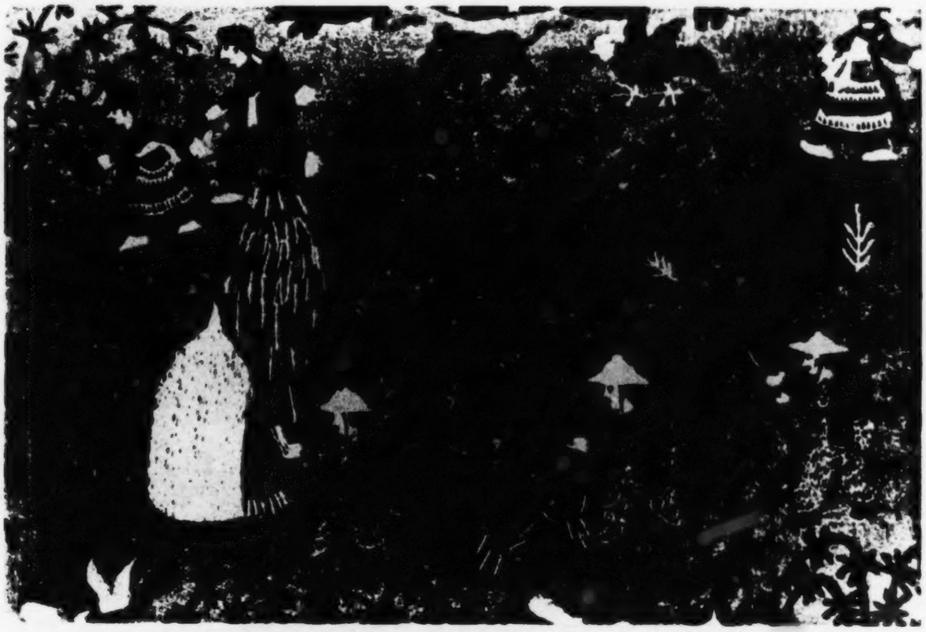

Figure 3. Pa 'ndao of Pathet Lao commandos burning Hmong rice harvest.

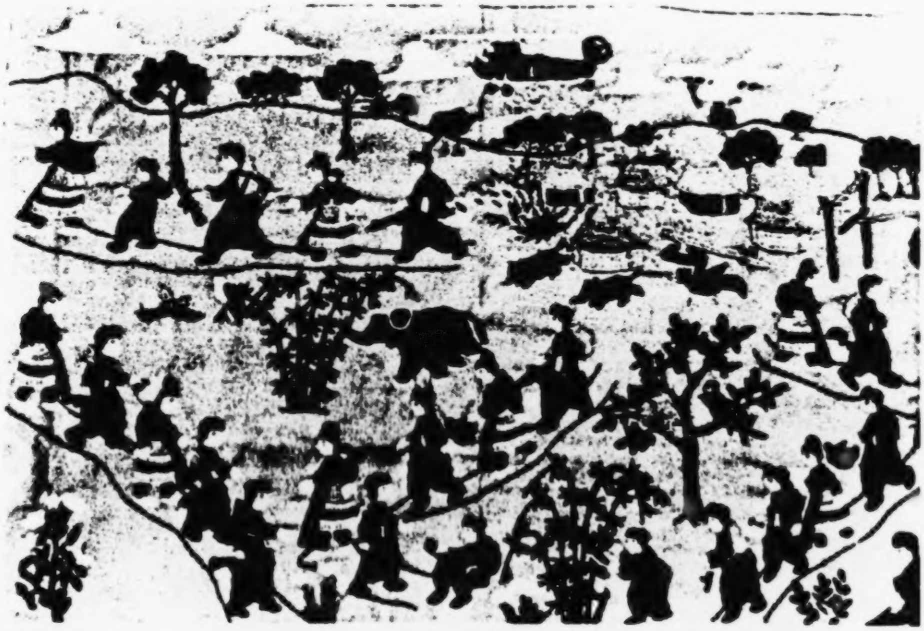

Figure 4. Pa 'ndao of Hmong fleeing village under communist attack.

When the Royal Lao government collapsed in 1975, the Hmong fled for their lives in the face of Pathet Lao reprisals. Some were flown to Thailand by C.I.A. airlifts, but many others were forced to make their tortuous escape through the jungle and across the Mekong River (see map, Figure 1). Pro-American villages were burned, livestock was slaughtered, and the Hmong themselves were hunted and killed (Armour, et al., 1981). Many Hmong, along with other Laotians, were sent to "re-education camps" which included hard labor, as well as political indoctrination. Even the Hmong who had cooperated with the Pathet Lao were subject to arrest and accused of having "imperialistic intentions and other unpatriotic designs" (Stuart-Fox, 1982, p. 203).

A majority of those sent to Pathet Lao "re-education" camps have died from exertion and malnutrition (Stuart-Fox, 1982). Amnesty International recently estimated that 6000 people remain in these camps (Cerquone, 1986).

Meanwhile, the attacks on Hmong resistance strongholds continue, and reportedly include the use of anti-personnel dart-bombs and chemical warfare (Vang, 1982). Sporadic attempts at subversion by the Hmong resistance operating from Chinese and Thai bases occur, but are largely unsuccessful (Cerquone, 1986). Some Hmong villages remain in the most isolated portions of

Laos, but goods such as clothes, salt, medicine, and tools are in very short supply, prompting further outmigration. Other Hmong groups have been encouraged by the Pathet Lao to return to their former villages to grow poppies so that the Pathet Lao can corner the opium market. Despite heavy taxes and official control, many are satisfied simply that the war is over and that they can resume some semblance of their former lives (Stuart-Fox, 1982).

### Refugees

In 1975 alone, 45,000 Hmong crossed the Mekong River into Thailand -- the peak year of such escapes. In 1980, 1,200 Hmong and 2,400 ethnic Lao continued to arrive in Thailand monthly (Stuart-Fox, 1982). Figure 5 is a photograph of a *pa 'ndao* showing Hmong crossing the Mekong River as they are shot at by the Pathet Lao and urged on by the Thai border police. (Notice the various floatation devises used: the Hmong did not know how to swim.) Stuart-Fox (1982) estimated that by March of 1980 49,000 Lao Hmong refugees were in Thai camps, 35,000 had been settled in the U.S., 6000 were in France; and 2000 had found refuge in Canada, Australia, Argentina, and French Guyana. Figure 6 shows a group of Hmong leaving the Thai camp for settlement in the United States.

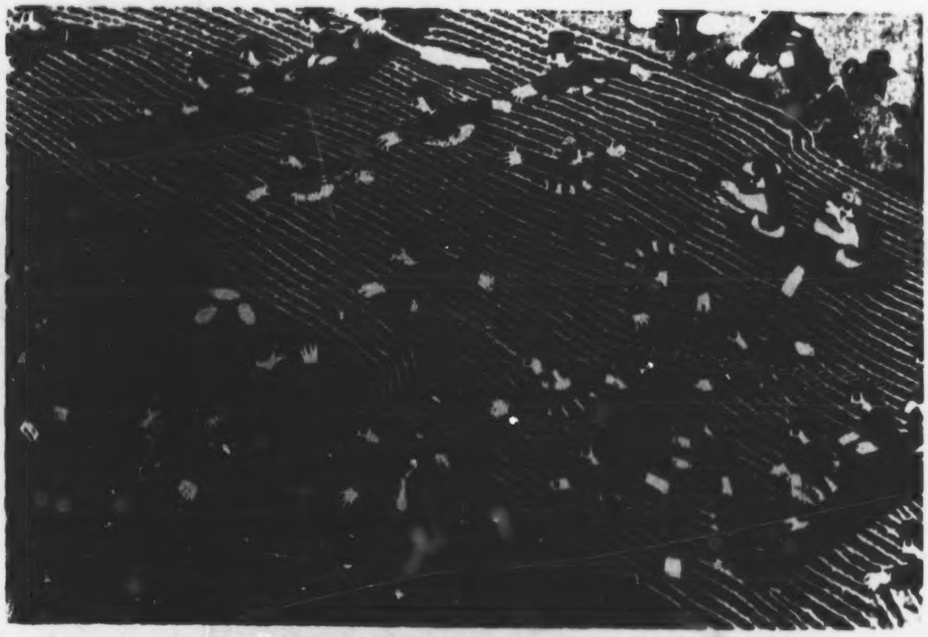

Figure 5. Pa 'ndao showing Pathet Lao Soldiers shoot at Hmong crossing the Mekong River, as Thai border police urge the refugees on.

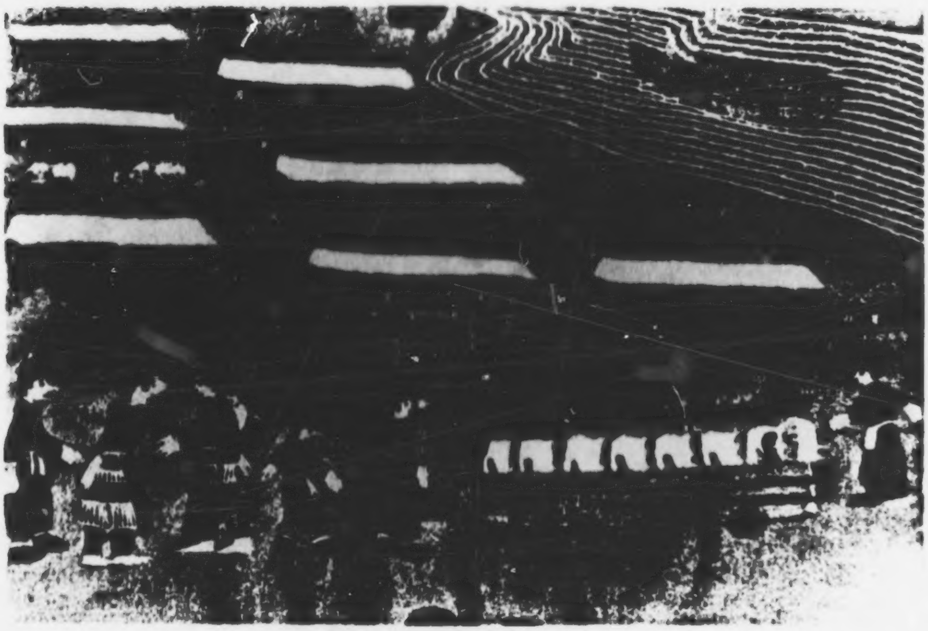

Figure 6. Pa 'ndao of Hmong leaving a Thai camp to settle in the United States.

Already strained by being the primary refuge for other Southeast Asians seeking sanctuary, Thailand instituted a policy of "humane deterrence" in 1981, under which those seeking asylum were placed in austere camps and denied the possibility of seeking resettlement in third countries. It was a measure that was instituted to deter refugees from entering Thailand unless they were in life-threatening situations. The U.S. supported the policy in order to encourage Thailand to continue providing refugee asylum (Cerquone, 1986).

The overcrowded Thai refugee camps have been plagued by severe safety, health, and sanitation problems. Mental and physical illnesses have been common, and suicide rates, high (Goldfarb, 1982, Cerquone, 1986).

Those Hmong who remained in Thai camps after 1981, and who were eligible to seek asylum elsewhere, have apparently been less interested in resettlement in a third country. Deterioration of Sino-Vietnamese relations, and the implications of a weakened Pathet Lao, prompted Hmong military leader Vang Pao to order those in Thai camps to stay there should the opportunity for a Hmong insurgency arise (Suhrke, 1985). There remains, however, another important factor in the decrease of Hmong seeking refuge in the United States.

Most of the Hmong entering the U.S. prior to 1980 had some formal education and they adjusted fairly easily. 1980 was the peak year for Hmong refuge in the U.S., but many in this late group had little or no previous western contact or formal education. Cassette tapes (the equivalent of letters for a largely spoken language) were sent back to the Hmong in the Thai camps with messages of broken families, thefts and beatings, and other hardships. Although almost 29,000 Hmong left Thailand for resettlement in third countries in 1980, in 1981 only 4,400 left the Thai camps. Since then, the numbers have been even lower (Kaufman, 1985).

Hammond (1985) lists some additional reasons why the refugees no longer wish to come to the United States: men with more than one wife want to keep their families together; men are afraid of the ease of divorce for women; women fear humiliation, injury, or death from American obstetrical procedures; the elderly fear Phee Nhak, a legendary giant who once terrorized the Hmong and is rumored to be in the U.S.; and the elderly are afraid that they would be forcibly relocated away from their children.

In April 1986, a special panel appointed by U.S. Secretary of State, George Shultz, recommended that only ethnic Lao with close associations or relatives in the United States be allowed to qualify for refugee status. "Resettlement is not necessarily the appropriate . . . solution for a significant part of the highland Lao ÆHmongÅ population," the report noted. It suggested that the Hmong, in particular, resettle locally in Thailand (Cerquone, 1986, p. 17).

Recently, it has been reported that Thailand has forcibly returned to Laos those Hmong denied refugee status in the United States. Some Hmong families in the U.S. are reportedly being blackmailed by the Pathet Lao to send dollars in return for their relatives' lives (Kiddie, 1987).

Other refugees bitterly claim that the Thai government is using the refugee situation as a profit-making venture: as long as the refugees remain in the camps, the United Nations, the United States, and other western countries will continue to send large amounts of relief money to avoid further resettlement of the refugees in the West. It is claimed that the Thai government spends only a small portion of these monies on the refugees (Vue, 1987).

Many of the Hmong interviewed for this study hope to become United States citizens so that they can sponsor family and relatives to this country. This is now the only means by which those Hmong still interested in coming are allowed to enter.

Approximately half of the Lao Hmong died in the Indochinese war, during genocide attempts immediately afterward, or during their escape from Laos (Meredith, 1983). The United States has too easily forgotten its responsibility to the Hmong, and their ties to U.S.

programs and policies during the U.S. military and intelligence involvement in Laos. It is as a direct consequence of those political ties that the Lao Hmong continue to face persecution and an uncertain existence.

## The Hmong in the United States

The Indochinese refugees brought to the United States were widely distributed around the country but, much to the chagrin of the their sponsors and service agencies, they soon began to redistribute themselves. The Hmong who came to the Denver-Boulder area came to be near three clan leaders who had been resettled here (Taniwaki, 1979).

Doubts were raised by several Hmong and refugee experts interviewed that the Denver-Boulder Hmong population represented all Hmong in the United States. For example, the Hmong say that those who want more education go to Wisconsin (because there is no upper age limit on high school enrollment), those who want to receive welfare go to California, and those who want to find jobs come to Colorado. This sentiment contains obvious biases, but seems to be justified by the literature.

Little has been written specifically on the local Hmong population. The relevant literature on the Hmong thoughout the United States, therefore, is reviewed to give the reader a broader sense of their situation in U.S. society.

## Population Characteristics

Approximately 85% of the Hmong resettled outside of Thailand came to the United States, with over half of them arriving in 1979 and 1980 (Olney, 1986). Major Hmong concentrations in the United States are in Central and Southern California, Minnesota, Illinois, Colorado, and Rhode Island (Bishop, 1984). Approximately one half of the U.S. Hmong population live in California, and seventy-eight percent live in communities with less than one thousand Hmong present (Olney, 1986).

Using 1983 data, Olney (1986) compiled a demographic profile of the Hmong in the U.S. The age structure is not unlike that for a developing country: 25% - 30% are under five, and over 50% are under fifteen years of age. Only 4% are over sixty. The sex ratio seems to be fairly balanced (based on a Minnesota sample), with 54% males, and 46% females. Twelve percent of the Hmong households nationwide are headed by women. Birth rates are approximately 50 per 1000, compared to 15.9 per 1000 for the entire U.S. in 1983.

While the high birth rate may be dropping, better medicine has lowered infant mortality rates, resulting in the largest family sizes for any refugee group in the U.S. Olney (1986) pointed out that large families are both a drain on family resources, and resources in themselves: in general, the Hmong desire large families. Weeks (1986) found that the current fertility of California's Hmong (and other Laotian hilltribe refugees) was higher than the completed fertility of women in the same groups. Statistically, this high fertility was shown not to be a "catch-up" phenomenon (replacing children lost in the war or making up for delayed fertility) or a consequence of early marriage patterns. Weeks suggested that the phenomenon must, therefore, be rooted in the "sociocultural context" (p. 9) of their resettlement.

Household sizes have varied from study to study and for different areas. Meredith (1983) found an average household size of 4.9 and an average age of 19.7 for the entire Hmong population of Nebraska. Sonsalla (1984) found the average number of children per household to be 7.0 for a sample of Minnesota Hmong.

Sonsalla (1984) also found that 68% of the Hmong students enrolled in the Minneapolis and St. Paul public schools had had no previous schooling, and that 98% of their parents had had no education in Laos. Contrary to the accepted notion that the Hmong are completely illiterate, Schwartz (1982) found that more than half of the young adult men interviewed in California had some literacy in their own language. Regarding English abilities, Downing, et al (1983) found that in a sample of Minnesota Hmong heads of household 65% said they spoke no English at all, 25% replied that they spoke some English, 10% said they spoke it well, and none felt that they spoke it very well.

Unemployment rates have also varied, but in general have been relatively high. For example, Sonsalla (1984) reported Hmong unemployment rates for Minnesota to be 54%, compared to 30% for ethnic Lao, 27% for Vietnamese, and 19% for Cambodians. Strouse (1985) found an unemployment rate of 92.% for Wisconsin, and Huebner (1983) found rates of 75% - 80% for Hawaii. Meredith (1983) found that 46% of all the Hmong households in Nebraska had no employed members.

### Ethnicity and Location

Preliminary studies have indicated that the racial attitudes of many whites to blacks does not extend to the Indochinese. Differences in white attitudes do not appear to exist between U.S. regions (Middleton, 1976; Cotter and Cotter, 1979).

However, the ethnic identities of the refugees, both from the perspective of the refugees themselves and in the view of the larger population, do show some regional differences. Pisarowicz (1979) examined the influence of urban regionalism on Indochinese refugee resettlement in Denver, Minneapolis, and San Fransisco. He found distinct patterns of behavior in each of these urban areas, particularly with regard to the ethnic identity of the refugees, and their secondary migration patterns.

In that study, the refugees in San Fransisco, with its existing Asian community, identified themselves as simply "Asians," as did the non-refugee population. In contrast, the refugees in Denver and Minneapolis, both cities with very small Asian populations, referred to themselves as Vietnamese, Hmong, Laotian, or by some other specific ethnic identity. The majorities of the non-refugee populations of these two cities additionally did not categorize the refugees as simply "Asians."

Settlement patterns also differed. Those refugees in Denver and Minneapolis resided in or near enclaves of specific ethnic groups, while those in San Francisco chose to dwell in established Asian neighborhoods (Pisarowicz, 1979).

Those studies that have explicitly examined Hmong ethnicity in the United States have largely concluded that the Hmong are resolved to avoid any assimilation beyond what is necessary for their survival (Bessac and Bessac, 1982; Scott, 1982; Lemoine, 1986). Lemoine (1986) further pointed out that the Hmong did not come to the U.S. only to save their lives, but also to save their Hmong identity which they have managed to protect from the Chinese, the French, and the Pathet Lao.

In another study, Dunnigan (1982) explained the importance of kinship structures as a means of coping with resettlement. Clans, lineages, sub-lineages, families, family associations, affinal networks, and voluntary associations were examined in the context of interpersonal politics and networking. Dunnigan also observed that the Hmong who have become the most acculturated often accept the roles of leadership within the Hmong community.

Bessac and Bessac (1982) came to the conclusion that the Montana Hmong are not substantially culturally different from other Southeast Asian groups in social organization, material culture, or ideas about the supernatural. However, the authors offered no examples of ethnic similarities. The Bessacs felt that the strong symbols used by the Hmong to represent their ethnic identity colored their worldview to the point that Americans who worked with them also saw them as being different.

Hmong ethnicity, whether it is unique or only imagined to be, plays an important role in secondary migrations and choice of new locations. Andrews and Stopp (1985) pointed to four major influences on the distribution of Indochinese refugees in the United States: 1) government policies of geographic dispersal to prevent a clustering such as that of Cuban refugees in southern Florida, 2) the settlement of the refugees wherever the voluntary agencies could locate sponsors, 3) the location of the initial U.S. resettlement camps, and, most importantly, 4) the secondary migration of individual refugees. The following section will examine this last phenomenon which has so confounded American sponsors and social service providers.

## Secondary Migrations

Thao (1982), himself a Hmong, identified two types of moves by the Hmong in the U.S.: those for reunification and those for betterment. He argued that reunification moves were not a process of secondary migration, but rather a continuation of the reunification process started after the dispersal of refugee families during the war. Other reasons for moves included moving to a community with better services, or moving to avoid community tensions (Thao, 1982). Li (1981) also listed kinship ties as the most common reason for migration, followed in importance by the search for states with better welfare payments, and better training opportunities.

The idea that reunification is part of an ongoing process can be better understood by an examination of the pre-resettlement expectations of the Hmong. First of all, they did not expect the United States to be such a vast country. They also thought that they would be settled in one large group, on something like an Indian reservation. The Hmong had no idea that they would be settled in urban areas, surrounded by strangers, and be expected to assimilate. Instead, they assumed that they would be able to farm and continue their lives much as they had in Laos (Bliatout, 1980).

Despite the initial shock of the realities of their resettlement, the Hmong have managed to adjust certain cultural traits to help them cope. For example, the Hmong have developed an extremely efficient oral communication network that extends throughout the United States, and they quickly learn of opportunities elsewhere. General Vang Pao, a former Hmong military leader, has attempted to unite various Hmong mutual assistance associations (M.A.A.s) across the country, but has met with only limited success. These mutual assistance associations are primarily social in function, but also offer self-help to their members. Apparently, the Hmong leaders have decided that such support groups operate best at a local level (Li, 1981). These local leaders and M.A.A.s are instrumental in providing the Hmong with the information on which the decision to move is based. The information received through this "grapevine" is not , however, always accurate.

The Hmong have traditionally made decisions as a group or community, and continue to do so. An example of this phenomenon can be seen in the mass migration of the Hmong to the San Joaquin Valley of California, and particularly to the cities of Fresno and Merced. In 1980, Fresno had 168 Hmong on public assistance; by 1983, there were over 7,000. Finck (1986) reported that the decision to move to California was based more on the shortcomings of their previous communities than on any real knowledge of opportunities in the state.

In Finck's study, interviews with Hmong in Fresno revealed the following reasons for their migration: the absence of jobs or a history of repeated lay-offs in the origin community, the desire for English classes and vocational training, the dream of farming, the change in national policy for cash assistance, and the snowballing effect of family reunification. What they found in Fresno were fewer available jobs than in many of the communities that they left, no vocational training, limited English-as-a-second-language (E.S.L.) instruction, and an inability to use their subsistance farming skills to compete with American agribusiness (Finck, 1986). Sonsalla (1984) reported that many of the Hmong who left Minnesota for California later returned. Nevertheless, Fresno still hosts a Hmong population of 18,000, making it the largest Hmong community outside of Thailand (American Council for Nationalities Services, 1987).

Approximately 90% of the refugees in Fresno are currently on public assistance (Sonsalla, 1984). As many as 4,000 more Hmong are expected to arrive in Fresno this year alone (American Council for Nationalities Services, 1987). Although the individuals involved in the actual move may feel that their relocation is part of a continuing reunification process, the moves are nevertheless important migrations in the eyes of the origin and destination communities: as the example of Fresno demonstrates, a community can quite literally be overwhelmed by the process.

## Acculturation

Contrary to the popular depiction of the Hmong as a group plucked from the Asian rainforest and resettled in the U.S. inner city, the group has been undergoing changes throughout its history. Smalley (1986) identified the six stages of their cultural adaptation as 1) the Laos penetration stage, in which they identified themselves with the Hmong in China and Vietnam, 2) the Laos traditional stage, in which they developed their own identity as a minority within Laos, and largely kept to themselves, 3) the Laos adaptive stage, in which they had more interaction with other Laotian ethnic groups, and took part in national politics, 4) the Laos resettlement stage, when the Hmong were forced out of their usual environment and into camps with other refugees, 5) the Thai camp stage, and 6) the United States resettlement stage.

Gross (1986) reported the language barrier as being the number one obstacle to Hmong adjustment. Li (1981) concurred, and pointed out that approximately 50% of Hmong men and 90% of Hmong women had never received any formal schooling: many had never held a pencil, and others didn't know before coming to the U.S. that there was such a thing as a written language.

Downing (1986) lists the practical barriers to adults learning English as their social isolation from English-speakers, the difficulty in learning English while on the job, the widespread unavalability of E.S.L. programs, and the transportation costs, lack of time, and family responsibilities which restrict access to the E.S.L. programs that do exist. In the same study, heads of households were asked to rate their English speaking proficiency: 73.9% responded that they spoke very little or no English (Downing, 1986). In another study (Strouse, 1985), Hmong educational problems were explained by the fact that no one had to make career choices in Laos, that the traditional hierarchy of decision making makes it difficult for women and children to make decisions, that those over forty consider themselves to be of retirement age and too old to learn, and that the Hmong have never had to plan ahead (their language, in fact, has no future tense).

Li (1981) found that it takes about one year of E.S.L. training for a Hmong before any progress can be seen. At the same time, many go to vocational training programs for welding or machine shop, for example, and receive a certificate degree without having learned anything due to their lack of English skills.

In attempting to document Hmong employment conditions, Vangyi (1986) found that their employment was usually unstable and that local differences in employment rates depend on the types and number of jobs available, the competition for those jobs, and variations in local economies. Most employed Hmong occupied entry-level positions in light manufacturing, or other jobs which required little previous training and minimal English. These jobs usually offered minimum wages, few benefits, and little or no opportunity for advancement (Vangyi, 1986). Another problem regarding employment is the lack of available day care, and the opinion of the Hmong that Americans do not take proper care of children (Villalva, 1985).

The other side of Hmong employment is welfare dependency. Federal policies link medical assistance to cash assistance, and place a one hundred hour per month limitation on earnings. Since Hmong usually have large families and the associated large medical costs, it is often very difficult to leave the welfare system (Vangyi, 1986). Vangyi stated

> . . . wherever we met with Hmong groups or individuals, they expressed their concerns that the American people may think that Hmong are lazy. Hmong have a stong desire to work, to get off welfare, to take any job with which they can support their families . . . . Many Hmong feel the welfare system serves to keep them on welfare and to keep them poor, and they recognize the irony in that situation (Vangyi, 1986, p. 196).

In a study of Isla Vista, California, Hmong, Gross (1986) outlined both the obstacles to and the factors which enhance overall Hmong adjustment. Obstacles included the language barrier; concern over "barbaric" American autopsy, embalming, and burial practices; vulnerability to crime; changes in family structure; isolation from the larger American society; economic difficulties; bad press; and the desire to return to Laos. Factors which enhanced Hmong adjustment were the tradition of a hard work ethic, an emphasis on the importance of education, an independent spirit, a strong desire for upward mobility, high self-esteem, an emphasis on money (formerly for the maintenance of social order in such forms as bride price or expensive funeral proceedings), flexibility, their former position as an ethnic minority, and their community organizations.

Hmong respondents in San Diego were asked by Strand and Jones (1985) to rank their problems. Lack of money and vocational training were followed in importance by the lack of help in finding employment and the lack of English skills. Furthermore, in comparison to the other Indochinese surveyed, the Hmong had the most difficulty with American life, prejudice, and government agencies.

In a study of the assimilation of Wisconsin Hmong, Strouse (1985) examined food habits, religion, friendship patterns, language and literacy retention, and feelings about Laos and the United States. All respondents preferred Hmong food, and continued whichever religious practices they had followed in Laos. All expressed the desire to have American friends, but few had them or even knew who their neighbors were. All continued to dream in Hmong, but agreed that English skills were essential. They were homesick for Laos, and clearly prefered Laos to the U.S. What they did like about the U.S. were conveniences like automobiles and running water, and the fact that there is no war.

## Satisfaction

Examining an immigrant or refugee group's progress simply in terms of its acculturation is interesting from the perspective of the larger society, but reveals only part of the group's total situation. An examination of the refugees' satisfaction with their jobs, homes, and life in general provides valuable information from a more humanistic perspective, and may be more meaningful for understanding their long range quality of life.

The only study which primarily examined Hmong life satisfaction was done by Meredith (1983) using the total adult Hmong population (145 individuals) of Nebraska. His conclusions were that most of the refugees were generally satisfied with their lives in the U.S., although their responses were slightly lower than those of Americans in similar studies.

In that study, the only two parts of the refugees' lives with which they were unhappy were their ability to speak English and their standard of living (especially their incomes). Although it may seem contradictory that one could not be satisfied with the above, yet still be satisfied overall, the study found that overall satisfaction was primarily related to satisfactions with oneself, rather than to any other internal or external factors. The self "domain" included the responses to questions about self-efficacy, perceived success, personal growth, problem solving, and a general evaluation of oneself. The other internal and external factors included demographic characteristics, housing, neighborhood, standard of living, work, family life, friendships, and health (Meridith, 1983).

A stronger sense of dissatisfaction can be seen in a survey of the Hmong in Minnesota. Downing, et al. (1983) asked respondents if their lives were better in the U.S. than in Laos. Sixty-five percent said no. When asked if they would like to go back to Laos, 86%

said yes. Sixty-nine percent replied that they were undecided about whether they would like to spend the rest of their lives in the U.S., whereas 18% said that they would not.

## Generational Differences

A fair body of literature exists on the generational differences between Hmong parents and their children. Much of it focuses on education and its role in assimilation.

The problem is best defined by Cohn (1986) as the position of the teenagers straddling two cultures with conflicting values. The major conflict is between the importance placed on individual independence by Americans and the traditional Hmong values of family and clan interdependence. Female teenagers, in particular, have problems fitting in, especially since they often have the primary responsibility for the care of younger children.

Strouse (1985) points out that Hmong students feel a pressure to forsake their old culture and join the mainstream. Their Asian appearance, however, does not facilitate this. Furthermore, they do not share a common background with their peers, having survived the horrors of war and the trauma of resettlement (Sonsalla, 1984).

Three groups of Hmong school children with different needs were identified by Cohn (1986). The first group was born in Laos and knew enough English to participate with other students in the U.S., and adjusted fairly well. The second group consisted of younger children, usually born in the U.S., who had had no previous contact with non-Hmong. This group learned English relatively quickly, but often exhibited adaptation difficulties. The final group was those older children and adolescents who had come to the U.S. with no previous formal education. They were often placed in grade levels according to their age rather than their skills, and experienced much frustration and high drop out rates. If they did manage to graduate, they were usually unprepared for either employment or continued education.

For those teenagers experiencing difficulties in school, traditional family patterns of early marriage and child rearing looked appealing. However, even those Hmong who finished high school often had problems competing for jobs and finding affordable housing. Aid to Families with Dependent Children was seen by Hmong elders, social workers, and educational professionals as an important disincentive for young Hmong to finish school (Cohn, 1986).

Less than 5% of the Hmong population of college age become full time college students. Cohn (1986) notes that the barriers to Hmong attending college include graduation from high school, financial problems, and family responsibilities.

The effects of living in a foreign language environment add to the generation gap. The older men who once had total authority over women and children must now rely on the children to translate or explain American customs. Women and teenage girls have discovered that they have certain rights in the United States that they did not have before (such as the rights not be physically abused and to have their own money). Therefore, the family and clan elders are often bypassed for leadership positions, in favor of younger men who are more assimilated and know how to deal with American customs (Li, 1981).

Despite their own problems of adjustment, Hmong youth often express their concern about the elderly (Gross, 1986). Hmong teens continue to feel responsible for supporting their retired parents, and for aiding the Hmong community when possible (Li, 1981; Cohn, 1986; Gross, 1986).

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGY

The first chapter detailed the research problem and scope, and the second reviewed the literature on the Hmong. The purpose of this third chapter is to outline the steps taken during data collection and analysis.

## Survey Construction

Once the hypotheses were formulated, topics and variables were selected to use as surrogates to test them. For example, the ownership of material goods common to most U.S. households (such as televisions and cars) and having American friends were seen as indications of acculturation.

Various questions were then written for each topic, and the best were selected. The final list of questions (from here on, refered to as the survey) was narrowed down to seven pages, with separate sections on personal information, employment, education, household, housing, location, and acculturation. Guidelines provided in Survey Research for Geographers (Sheskin, 1985) were followed for the selection of a survey mechanism and for survey ethics. Appendix A contains a copy of the final survey.

## Interviews with Refugee Experts

In order to establish some contacts within the Hmong community and to gain information and feedback on my research, I interviewed several local individuals who work with refugees daily. The information and insights gained from these people were invaluable to the completion of this study.

The first of these interviews was with Jeanne Kiddie, L.P.N., Clinic Coordinator of The People's Clinic, located in San Juan del Centro, a low income housing development. She provided names of several local Hmong leaders, as well as some valuable insights into the current problems faced by the Hmong, from a social and medical services viewpoint.

Dr. Lawrence Aylesworth, a clinical psychologist in Denver, was also interviewed. Having done extensive research on local refugee populations, Dr. Aylesworth proved to be the source of a wealth of information on dealing with the political aspect of refugee contacts. For example, he made suggestions on how to avoid interclan conflicts by dealing with only certain clan leaders who represent more than one clan. He also suggested the characteristics to look for in an interpreter.

Vue Leng, president of the local Lao Family Community, a Hmong mutual assistance association, provided a great deal of factual and perceptual information on the Hmong. A Hmong himself, Mr. Vue was able to address many questions regarding the literature on the Hmong in Laos, Thailand, and the United States.

## Hmong Translation

Vue Leng recommended his brother, Houa, as an interpreter. A third year chemistry and math major at the University of Colorado, Houa was better educated than most Hmong, as well as fluent in English. As the brother of the president of a multi-clan Hmong mutual assistance association, he was less likely to be seen as a member of a rival clan. The fact that he was male might have made it more likely that those Hmong asked for interviews took the study seriously. His extensive social contacts in the Hmong community proved invaluable in making the initial contacts for interviews. Finally, the fact that he was genuinely interested in my research, and very willing to take part in it (whether or not he was compensated) made him a committed and patient interpreter.

We began by rewriting (several times) the survey questions to place them into a Hmong cultural context. He had previously read the survey and my thesis abstract and we had discussed the goals of the study so that he had a better idea of what I was really trying to ask. We practiced the interview by interviewing each other, which also helped us get to know each other. We found that the survey took about forty minutes to administer. Houa then took the revised survey home to practice interpreting it in Hmong to his mother. Since he did not write in Hmong, he could not make a standardized written Hmong version: he had to memorize his translations of the questions so as to word them consistently.

## Survey Revisions

The first change which Houa suggested was to reword questions regarding family and relatives, since Hmong kinship was slightly different. All Hmong in the area had local "cousins" (others in the same clan), and referred to them as relatives. Parents, siblings, and the children of siblings were referred to as family.

A question asking whether they practiced the "Hmong way," the "American way," or a combination of both for religion and medicine was broken down into two separate questions, one on religion and one on medicine. Houa suggested that many might practice the "Hmong way" for religion, but a combination of both for medicine: although minor illnesses and injuries might be treated with traditional remedies, a major problem might call for a trip to the emergency room or to an American doctor rather than to the local shaman.

Another question was similarly broken in two. The phrase "...would you return to Laos" became "...would you like to visit Laos" and "...would you move back to Laos" to make the distinction between temporary and permanent moves. It was suggested that whereas many would be interested in visiting, fewer would consider moving back permanently after experiencing Western conveniences and entertainment.

Finally, questions regarding the location of family in the United States were made more explicit. For example, distinct inquiries were made regarding those living in the same dwelling unit, those not in the same dwelling unit but in Colorado, those in the U.S. but not in Colorado, those in Thai refugee camps, and those in Laos.

## Sample Selection

Since the Hmong use their clan names as surnames, and fourteen clans were known to be in the Denver area (of sixteen to eighteen known to be in the United States), the Denver and Boulder telephone directories were used to compile a list of Hmong households. Although some clan names such as Yang or Lee may also have been used by other Asian ethnic groups, Hmong personal names were distinctive. Two hundred and thirty-three local Hmong households were identified.

An official, but outdated, list of all of the Hmong in the area had been compiled by Lao Family Community in approximately 1984. It listed a total of one hundred and eighty-one households with an average household size of 6.1, representing 1104 individuals (Lao Family Community, no date).

When the two hundred and thirty-three households on the phone directory list were multiplied by the above average household size, it could be seen to represent approximately 1421 individuals. This number fit in well with various agency approximations of 1200-2000 Hmong currently in the area. (The 2000 figure was considered by some to have been inflated by the state in order to get more federal refugee funds.)

I was, therefore, fairly confident that the household list included the vast majority of local Hmong. When I raised the question of a possible bias towards those with listed telephone numbers, my interpreter replied that a telephone was a required part of any Hmong home, since many were illiterate or at least unsure of their English, and that contacts with other Hmong both in the area and out-of-state were vital. That nearly all possessed telephones seems to be a realistic assumption, but Vue Leng (1987) estimated that up to one fourth of the Hmong in Colorado had unlisted telephone numbers due to some harassment perceived to be from American adolescents. However, since my list probably represented more individuals than did the official list compiled by Mr. Vue, and his list presumably included unlisted numbers, he may have overestimated the occurrence of unlisted numbers. It seems unlikely that the Hmong population would have increased dramatically in the last three or four years, without notice from the clan leaders or agency representatives.

Households were alphabetized and numbered sequentially, then seventy-three households were selected using a random number table. Although fewer households were originally selected, it soon became apparent that a larger sample list would be necessary. Seventeen of the households on the final list had either moved from the area or changed to an unlisted telephone number. Nine never answered, despite repeated calls. Twenty-five of those contacted were not interested in being interviewed or were unable to participate.

Interviews were set up at the convenience of the remaining twenty-two households. In only four instances did both the householder and his wife agree to be interviewed separately. Twice, appointments were broken by potential respondents who had decided not to be interviewed. The resulting interviews were conducted with twenty-four individuals from twenty households on the sample list.

A male bias appeared early in the sampling procedure for various reasons. The sample list taken from the telephone directories included only household heads who were overwhelmingly male: names of other household members were unavailable. During the initial telephone conversation, the interpreter asked if we could please interview all of the adults in the household. If a female answered the phone, she nearly always replied that she must first ask her husband and/or son for his permission for her to be interviewed. When contact was made with the household heads, they often made it clear that they spoke for the household, and that we would therefore interview them alone. Those women in the sample may, therefore, be over-representative of female heads of household.

In other cases, the women and elderly in the family insisted that they did not know enough to answer any questions, not even ones about themselves. The elderly, in particular, had often lost many of their children as well as their homes in the war, and simply didn't wish to discuss their feelings about their situation in the United States. Working women with children often did not feel that they had the time to be interviewed.

Another bias of the sample was against those Hmong living in inner city Denver. Apparently they had been the victims of some recent maliciousness, and were unwilling to allow strangers into their homes. According to the leader I interviewed, these inner city Hmong tend to work outside of the established Hmong network and are, therefore, very vulnerable in times of crises. Rumors of their situation made other Hmong suspicious, and they would not speak to us until they had confirmed my research with Lao Family Community.

Since the local Hmong community is relatively small and tightly-knit, my interpreter knew or was acquainted with many of those on the sample list. This may have introduced another bias towards those who knew him, since they may have been more likely to cooperate.

Once the sample list was exhausted, a demographic profile of the respondents was compiled. It was found that nineteen (79.2%) of the twenty-four Hmong interviewed were male, and only five (20.8%) were female. Individual women from the larger Hmong community were then selected to be asked for interviews: three additional female respondents were chosen in this manner. The age distribution of the respondents appeared much more random, but no married teenagers had been selected. Overtures made to married teens, however, were not successful.

## Data Collection - Interviews with the Hmong

All possible precautions were taken to put the interviewees at ease. My acceptance as a non-government researcher, who was genuinely interested in their situation, was of vital importance to the success of the study.

Initial telephone contacts were made by the interpreter in their native language. He explained my research and that I would very much like to interview them, and immediately stressed that I was not a government official. If they were willing to be interviewed, a meeting place and time were arranged, and their address confirmed.

For the interviews, we both dressed casually to further put them at ease. I carried my clipboard and papers in a shoulder bag rather than a briefcase. Before each interview, we again explained the project and specified that it was part of my masters thesis. They were told not to answer any questions that they were uncomfortable answering, and that the interview would be stopped at any time at their request.

That they understood my position seemed to be reflected by the fact that they often asked me questions about my studies and career goals, and offered us refreshments. Many had apparently never had an American in their home, and often thanked me for "visiting."

## Data Processing

Due to the large amount of information collected from each interview, only the answers to certain questions were chosen for computer analysis (see Table 1). Others were not selected for various reasons. They may have proved difficult to translate into Hmong, or may have appeared to solicit unmeaningful responses. Others were worded awkwardly and seemed to be interpreted differently by various individuals. (Many of the questions providing unreliable information were identified early in the interview phase of research, but they were left in the survey to assure that the interviews were conducted in a consistent manner.) See Appendix A for a copy of the survey questions as they were asked of the interviewees.

A data file containing the variables in Table 1 for each respondent was entered into a series of SPSS-X analyses to calculate frequencies, cross tabulations, and other descriptive statistics for various categories of respondents.

The categories selected for analysis included ethnic sub-group, sex, age, and education. All those interviewed were either Green or White Hmong: the literature implied major cultural and linguistic differences between the two groups. Differences in

Table 1. Variable names and explanations.

| Variable | Explanation |
|---|---|
| Age | age |
| Sex | sex |
| Marital Status | marital status |
| Sub-Group | ethnic sub-group |
| Thai | years in Thai refugee camp |
| Year | year came to U.S. |
| Citizen | U.S. citizen? |
| Employed | employed? |
| Wage | hourly wage |
| Time | years at current employer |
| Jobsat | satisfaction with job |
| Educ | level of formal education |
| Hhsize | no. of persons in household |
| Nucfam | nuclear family? |
| Children | no. of children |
| Mother | no. of mother's children |
| All | live with all fam. in area? |
| Relcamp | relatives in Thai camps? |
| Rellaos | relatives in Laos? |
| Prison | relative in Laos prison? |
| Dwelling | live in apartment or house? |
| Own | own or rent? |
| Bdrm | no. of bedrooms |
| Bills | mo. rent/mortg. & utilities |
| Like | like this apartment/house? |
| Whyhere | why this a/h rather than another in the area? |
| Mobility | no. dwellings in Denver-Boulder area |
| Settle | location of first U.S. resettlement |
| Places | lived other places besides where 1st sett. & here |
| Hmong | other Hmong in neighborhood? |
| Perm | plan permanent stay in Colo? |
| Welfare | receive welfare? |
| Fdstamps | receive foodstamps? |
| Colo | no. family (other than a/h) in Colorado |
| States | relatives in other states? |
| Accult | acculturation value |
| Try | should Hmong try to be more like Americans? |
| Traditions | will Hmong traditions be able to continue in U.S.? |
| Better | is your life better now than 3-4 years ago? |
| Visit | if could do so peaceably, would you visit Laos? |
| Move | if could do so peaceable, would you move back to Laos? |
| Satis | are you satisfied/dissatis. with your life at the present? |
| Future | do you expect your future to be good/bad? |

responses by sex were expected, but it was unclear to what extent they would exist.

For the purposes of comparing variables across age groups, only three categories were used: those respondents under thirty years old, those thirty to thirty-nine, and those forty and older. This compares to eight categories used in the original age group variable. Two of the refugee experts interviewed had observed different rates of acculturation for those approximately over and under thirty years of age, and the researcher was interested to see if there would be differences for those forty and older.

Likewise, the level of formal education was categorized differently for use as a variable and for comparing other variables to education. Whereas six groupings were used to analyze the variable (see the education section of Analysis of the Data in Chapter IV for an explanation of the groupings), only three categories were used in cross tabulations with other variables.

The rationale for these reductions in number of categories for variables used to cross tabulate other variables was twofold. Firstly, fewer categories eased the amount of data to be analyzed. Secondly, and more importantly, the sample size was too small to allow any meaningful analysis of variables of sub-populations with fewer than four individuals. Table 2 shows the subpopulation categories used for examination of the responses.

Table 2. Sub-populations of the respondents.

| Category | No. of Individuals |
|---|---|
| All Cases | 27 |
| White Hmong | 21 |
| Green Hmong | 6 |
| Male | 19 |
| Female | 8 |
| Less than 30 Yrs. | 9 |
| 30 - 39 Yrs. | 9 |
| 40 Yrs. and Older | 9 |
| No Formal Education | 7 |
| Some Lao Education | 9 |
| Some U.S. Education | 7 |
| U.S. High Schl. Graduate | 4 |

# CHAPTER IV

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter has been divided into three sections. In the first, case studies of five individuals are presented to give the reader a better feeling for the way the Hmong live in this area. The second section contains the data analysis, and the third includes the discussion of the findings in regard to the research hypotheses.

### Some Individual Respondents

The following are descriptions of some respondents that were representative of the overall sample. The information was compiled from the respondents' answers to the survey questions and from the researcher's personal notes taken during and immediately after the interviews. Names were replaced with letters and other identifiable information was obscured to preserve confidentiality. If space permitted, case studies would have been provided for all respondents: no two people interviewed were completely similar, they simply found themselves in similar circumstances.

Respondent A

A thirty year old White Hmong, Mr. A spent three years in a Thai refugee camp and arrived in the United States in 1978. For the last six years, he has worked at a computer and electronics manufacturing firm where he is currently a manufacturing technician, a job that he enjoys and that has allowed him to make many American friends.

While in Laos, he attended one year of college and then took three years of classes in English, French, and Thai while in Thailand. First settled in Nebraska, he later moved to Montana before moving to the Denver area. He attended three months of American high school before dropping out because it was too difficult, but later took adult education courses in English and mathematics, and eventually gained certificate degrees in welding, machine shop, and electronics technology.

The father of two sons and a daughter, Mr. A is now a U.S. citizen and thinks that American ways are often better for individuals -- especially for women -- than are the traditional Hmong ways. He would allow his children to marry non-Hmong if they so desired. He thinks that Hmong traditions will gradually change in the U.S. and will eventually die out.

Mr. A speaks fluent English, owns a television and a car, and has a driver's licence. His family practices both Hmong and American forms of religion and medicine, and speaks Hmong most often at home. Mr. A likes both Hmong and American food, but the family eats Hmong food most often.

The A's live in a three bedroom rented house that Mr. A likes except that he feels the rooms are too small. He likes the small suburban atmosphere and the lack of traffic in the area where they reside. Mr. A's home is only the second that he has lived in in the Denver-Boulder area. He plans on staying here permanently, because he feel that there are many job opportunities.

His father, who also lives with him, is seventy-one years old and a Hmong shaman, but was traumatized by a stroke and now rarely speaks. His mother lives next door with his brother's family, another brother, and a sister. The extended family enjoys each others' company and support, and are happy to live in such close proximity.

Other relatives live in California, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Washington. Still others remain in Thailand and Laos. Mr. A reports that many relatives remaining in Laos had been incarcerated, tortured, and killed since 1985.

Although Mr. A is satisfied with his life at this time, feels that his life is better than it was three or four years ago, and feels that his future here will be very good, he dreams of returning to Laos and helping set up a new social order that will combine the best of Hmong, Lao, and American ideals.

Respondent B

Mr. B, a thirty-six year old White Hmong, is married and has five children. The family lives in a three bedroom apartment in a low-income housing complex, primarily because he couldn't find any other apartments as inexpensive that were close to his work. The apartment is the fourth place that they have lived in this area. Other Hmong live in the same complex.

Mr. B has no other family living in Colorado, but he does have one relative in California. He has cousins in Laos and in Thai refugee camps.

He attained a high school education in Laos, but was unable to take further classes due to the war (in which he was a soldier) and family and work pressures. He resided in a Thai refugee camp for four years before coming to the United States in 1979. First settled in Nebraska, he deboned chicken in a food processing factory before moving to this area. For the last six years he has had an assembly job with a hospital supply company, a job that he likes because it pays well. He has made several American friends there, but is unsure that he will remain permanently in Colorado.

He would very much like to become a U.S. citizen, but fears that the citizenship test would be too difficult for someone with his limited education. By communicating with his American friends at work and by listening to the television, Mr. B was able to teach himself to speak English, as well as to read and write "a little bit." When asked if he would like to get any more education, he responded that he would really like to learn to weld, but has no time to do so.

Hmong is the language most spoken at Mr. B's home, and although he likes both Hmong and American food, the family eats Hmong food most often. They possess a television and an automobile, and he has a driver's licence.

Mr. B thinks that the Hmong should try to be more like Americans; since they are now living in the U.S. and are unlikely to leave, he feels that it is time for them to try to adjust. If his children wanted to marry non-Hmong, he would give them permission. He is unsure that the Hmong traditions will be able to continue in the U.S.

Mr. B communicated that he is dissatisfied with his life at the present due to his lack of education, although he is better off than he was three or four years ago since he now better understands American ways. He is very unsure about his future here, and would like to return to Laos if it were no longer under communist control.

Respondent C

A twenty-four year old White Hmong, Mr. C spent three or four years in a Thai camp before being resettled in the Denver area in 1979. He had only four years of schooling in Laos, but earned a high school diploma here and completed one and one half years of college at the Colorado School of Mines before dropping out to work full time to support his family.

He owns a nice house on a major thoroughfare near downtown Denver, and is the head of a household which includes his wife, two children, and his seventeen year old brother. He owns a television and a car, and possesses a driver's licence. Hmong is spoken most often at home, but Mr. C likes and eats both Hmong and American food: a typical meal consists of hamburgers and rice. The family uses both Hmong and western religious practices, but utilizes mostly American medical treatments.

His mother-in-law, who lives three blocks away, is the only other Hmong in his neighborhood. His current home is the third dwelling that he has occupied in this area. Although he likes the neighborhood because it is inexpensive and is close to his work, and he likes the house itself, Mr. C feels that he would be more comfortable in a larger house. He is not sure that he will stay in Colorado, and his residence will depend upon the job market for his profession.

One of ten children, he has a sister who also lives in Colorado, and other family members in Minnesota and California. Mr. C has several uncles in Thai refugee camps, but no relatives remain in Laos.

For the last three years he has been employed as a goldsmith, a job which pays a salary in the mid-twenties (thousands). Although he likes his job, and enjoys the creative aspects of his craft, he would like to be able to finish his degree in gemology at the School of Mines, and has applied for a bank loan to allow him to open his own jewelry business.

Mr. C has many American friends from school and work, and would not mind if his children decided to marry non-Hmong. He feels that life is easier for the Hmong here who try to be more like Americans, and thinks that while some Hmong traditions will survive, they will be "watered down."

Mr. C feels that his life is better than three or four years ago: he finds it easier to make a living, and enjoys his urban life style. Satisfied with the present, he expects the future to be even better. He isn't currently a U.S. citizen, but intends to become one.

When asked if he would consider visiting or moving back to Laos under peaceful circumstances, Mr. C said that he would go immediately. While he is happy here, the United States isn't his country. Laos is.

Respondents D

Mr. and Mrs. D are a married couple who spent seven months in a Thai camp before their nieces in Denver sponsored them to come to this area in 1980. They have no immediate family members in the United States or in Thailand, but Mrs. D has four sisters and one brother who live in Vietnam, and Mr. D has cousins who are farming in Laos.

Both are White Hmong, and had no formal education before coming to the United States. Mrs. D took six or seven months of E.S.L. classes here, while Mr. D took one year of E.S.L. Their English, however, is not good. They both were very frustrated with the classes, and now feel that they are too old to learn any more: Mrs. D is thirty-six and Mr. D is forty years old. In Laos, they would be old enough to retire and have their children take care of them: however, they have been unable to have children.

Mr. D was recently laid off, but will start a training program for a new job soon. In the past, he had been employed as a custodian at a local university, and has done soldering in an assembly line. His new job will also be soldering. Mrs. D had worked as a weaver from 1981 until 1985 when she was laid off, and has since washed soldering for $4.50 per hour in the same factory which recently laid off Mr. D. She basically likes her job, but wishes that it was not such dirty work, and is angry that her employer does not automatically increase her wages as he does for her American co-workers. In Laos, Mr. D had been a military cook, while Mrs. D ran the family farm.

They live in a low income apartment complex, primarily because of the security of living near other Hmong. They remember moving to at least five different apartments in the area. Mr. and Mrs. D plan to stay in Colorado permanently, since they feel that there are more employment opportunities for them here. Whereas Mr. D is interested in moving back to Laos if he could do so peaceably, Mrs. D feels that they would be better off staying here.

The couple owns a television and car, and both have driver's licences. They like to eat both Hmong and American food, and eat both in equal quantities. Mrs. D particularly enjoys hamburgers and pizza.

Mr. D continues to practice Hmong religion, whereas Mrs. D practices both Hmong and American religion, whichever seems best for a particular situation. Because it is hard to find Hmong medicinal remedies in this area, both use American remedies. They agree that they would allow their (hypothetical) children to marry non-Hmong, and Mrs. D insists that she would prefer them to marry Americans. Both say that they have American friends who they met at Mrs. D's church.

When asked if the Hmong should try to be more like Americans, Mr. D said that he has to use both Hmong and American ways to get by, and that it doesn't matter to him which he uses. Mrs. D replied that since the Hmong are living in America, they should try to be more like Americans. She doesn't think that other Hmong would necessarily agree, however. Mr. and Mrs. D would both like to become American citizens, if they could pass the test. Both felt that Hmong traditions would be unable to continue in the United States for very long.

The couple agree that their lives are much better now than they were three or four years ago, because they can get around easier now that they better understand American ways. Mr. D feels that his lack of education and inability to express himself are acute enough to say that he is dissatisfied with his life. He says that he doesn't feel that many non-Hmong take advantage of him due to his poor English, but regrets his inability to prove himself to prospective employers: even though he has the skills to be a good worker, it is hard to find employment without English skills. He is unsure of the future because of his continued difficulty in finding stable employment. He doesn't feel that Americans give him a chance to prove that he can work, and is genuinely afraid that someday he may end up living in the streets or in a slum.

Although Mrs. D is currently satisfied with her life, she is unsure of her future because of difficulties in finding employment with a limited education.

## Respondent E

Mrs. E is a forty-nine year old White Hmong. Her former husband, whom she divorced, remains in Laos with another wife and his children by that wife. Mrs. E lives in a government subsidized three bedroom apartment with two sons aged seventeen and twelve, and two daughters aged fourteen and nine. She says that she likes the apartment, but would like any place that was so inexpensive (she pays only $79 per month for rent and utilities). She is unemployed because she is a mother and housewife, and has no job skills. The family receives both welfare and food stamps. Most days, she babysits for the children of her two married daughters who live in the area.

Since she is now living in the United States and doesn't expect to ever return to Laos, she hopes to become a U.S. citizen. She has no formal education, but took two years of classes in Laos and one year of Hmong and English in Thailand. After coming to the U.S., she took one year of E.S.L. and has continued to take English lessons once a week for the last six years. She still says that she doesn't speak English as well as she would like, and would like to continue taking classes. She compares her progress to that of her children, and is frustrated with her inability to learn as fast as she would like. Unfortunately, we were unable to communicate without the interpreter.

She reports that several of her cousins recently escaped from a Pathet Lao prison and are now residing in a Thai refugee camp. Her husband and his other family are the only family members still in Laos.

Mrs. E spent five years herself in a Thai camp before being sponsored by a church to this area in 1980. She has lived in three apartments here, and unlike many Hmong, has not moved to other cities. She thinks that Colorado is the best place in the U.S. in which to live, but says that she would follow her children to other places if they moved. Besides the two married daughters who live in the Denver-Boulder area, she has married children who live in Wisconsin and Texas.

Although the family speaks mostly Hmong at home, and eats mostly Hmong food, Mrs. E said that she also likes the taste of American food. She owns a television and a car, and has a driver's license so that she is able to drive herself around. Both Hmong and American religious and medical practices are used in her household.

Mrs. E has some American friends she met at school and at church, but she has problems communicating with them. She is unsure that, if she were to remarry, she would consider marrying a non-Hmong. She would, however, allow her unmarried children to wed non-Hmong, if they so desired. She has mixed feelings about whether or not the Hmong should try to be more like Americans, and thinks that some Hmong traditions will be able to continue, while others will gradually be replaced by American ways.

Satisfied with her life, Mrs. E says that since she can now speak more English and drive herself around, her life is better than it was three or four years ago. If she could do so peaceably, she would like to visit Laos, but she would not like to move back: she would be haunted by the fear of the war returning. Although she is unsure of her future, she is a deeply religious Christian who feels that God and the Americans have taken good care of her, and will continue to do so.

## Analysis of the Data

The preceeding section offered the reader a glimpse into the lives of several individual respondents. This section presents the results of the aggregated data in order to analyze them at this larger scale. While less personal in nature, it presents an overall view of the sample population.

## Personal Information

The final sample included nineteen males (70.4%) and eight females (29.6%). Twenty of the respondents (74.1%) were married, and twenty-one (77.8%) belonged to the White Hmong ethnic sub-group whereas six (22.2%) were Green Hmong (although a few Striped Hmong are reportedly in the area, none was selected in the sampling process). The respondents were distributed equally between the three age groups used in the analysis: those under thirty years old, those between thirty and thirty-nine years old, and those over forty years old. Appendix B contains the detailed data broken down by each of the above demographic characteristics, as well as by educational levels.

As predicted in the literature on Hmong migration to the United States, most of the respondents arrived in the U.S. in 1979 or 1980 (37.0% and 33.3%, respectively). When the year of arrival was cross tabulated with current educational level, those with no formal education had a median arrival date of 1980, whereas the other groups have median responses of 1979 or 1979/1980. This sample matches findings reported in the literature that those Hmong who came to the United States after 1979 were less educated.

The respondents averaged 2.2 years in Thai refugee camps before their resettlement to the West. Those currently in the thirty to thirty-nine year old age group averaged 2.8 years, those younger than thirty stayed only an average of 1.7 years, and those older averaged 2.2 years. One possible explanation for the middle age group's length of time in the refugee camps is that they may have been in a position to flee to Thailand at an earlier date. This, however, is unverified.

## Employment

Twenty of the respondents worked outside of the home at the time of the interview; seven did not. Two of the seven unemployed were housewives, two were elderly (both of which siad that they were seeking employment), two were full-time high school students (one was seeking summer employment), and one had been laid-off from his job and was looking for a new one.

According to Current Population Survey (United States Bureau of Census, 1985) a civilian is considered to be unemployed if they are over sixteen and seeking employment. By this definition, both of the elderly, one of the students, and the laid-off worker were officially unemployed. This resulted in an unemployment rate of 14.8 for the sample population -- a figure not considerably lower than those reported for other Hmong communities (for example, Sonsalla, 1984; or Vangyim 1986), but not that distant from the 1985 unemployment rates for the United States (7.2%) or for Colorado (5.9%).

Of the fifteen employed male respondents, five were assembly line workers, four were machine operators, three were technicians, one was a pastor, one was a technical supervisor, and one was a goldsmith. Two of the five employed women worked on assembly lines, one washed soldering, one was a machine operator, and the last was a seamstress.

The highest rates of unemployment were for the Green Hmong (33.3%) and for those with no formal education (28.6%). Women and U.S. High school graduates showed no unemployment among those who were seeking employment.

The employed respondents averaged hourly wages of $7.75 which translates to approximately $16,120 per year. This is less than 70% of the 1985 U.S. median income of $23.618 (United States Bureau of the Census, 1986).

The average male earned $8.60 per hour, 71.9% higher than the female average of $5.00. Overall they averaged 3.65 years at their current employers, with the men averaging 4.37 years and the women, 1.64. The fact that the women typically held lower paying and relatively lower status jobs, and had either been in the job market for a shorter period of time or had changed employment more often (as indicated by their average length of time at current employer), may reflect not only gender differences in education but also traditional Hmong gender roles.

Those forty and older earned $9.26, the highest mean wage for any group. This finding was difficult to explain since that age group was neither male dominated nor had worked for the current employer for the longest average length of time. Perhaps employers felt that older workers were more reliable or thorough, and were willing to pay more for these traits. Or perhaps the sample siae of five respondents for this category was inadequate for a meaningful analysis.

A direct relationship exists between time at current employer and the first three educational levels (up to some U.S. high school, but no diploma). For high school graduates, however, the length of time with the current employer was lower, most likely due to the relative youth of this group and a resulting shorter time period in the job market.

Fifteen of twenty employed respondents reported that they were satisfied with their jobs, while four were dissatisfied, and one was unsure. No matter what categories were used to disaggregate the employed respondents (sub-group, sex, age, and education), the modal reply was "satisfied with my job."

Of the four workers expressing dissatisfaction with their employment, two (both assembly line workers) didn't feel that they made enough money (one made $4.00 per hour and the other prefered not to reveal his wage). The other two (both machine operators) felt that their jobs were too difficult, dirty, and dangerous. On the other hand, those who indicated satisfaction with their jobs often remarked that they "made good money." Those expressing dissatisfaction were found in all categories except for the Green Hmong, and those with no formal education -- the groups with the highest rates of unemployment.

## Education

It was difficult to determine a method for comparing educational levels, primarily due to differences between Laotian and American formal education. While some Hmong reported that six years of education in Laos was the requirement for a high school diploma, others compared it to a U.S. sixth grade education. Some of the respondents with seven years of Lao schooling claimed a year of college, while others claimed only a junior high school level education. The war interrupted schooling for some, and prevented it for others. Formal education had been largely unavailable to the elderly and female respondents, and others claimed that it had been only for the elite. Apparently, no central agency set standards for different Laotian schools until recently. While in Thai refugee camps, some refugees were able to pay for classes (most often E.S.L.), but most found the cost to be prohibitive.

For the purposes of comparison, the scale in Table 3 was used to assign levels of highest formal education for each respondent. While this scale has its disadvantages (especially in devaluing a U.S. high school diploma and the experience of college), it was a compromise between the conflicting reports on how the two educational systems compared.

Table 3. Educational Levels

| Level | Description |
|---|---|
| 0 | No formal education, maybe some E.S.L. |
| 1 | No formal education, but some vocational training; or one year of schooling in Laos |
| 2-6 | Years of schooling in Laos |
| 7 | Six years of schooling in Laos, plus some vocational training in the U.S.; or some U.S. high school |
| 8 | U.S. high school graduate |
| 9 | Some U.S. college education |

The overall average educational level was 4.4, while the males averaged 5.5 and the females 1.9. Only one female respondent, a recent high school graduate, had had any schooling in the United States beyond E.S.L. Thus it can be seen that the "average" Hmong respondent had no U.S. high school education, but some Laotian schooling. Educational attainment figures for the entire U.S. for persons twenty-five years and older indicate that in 1985, 73.9% had completed four years of high school or more (United States bureau of the Census, 1986). The Hmong in this sample, therefore, have very low educational attainment in comparison to the larger population.

When the sample was broken into age groups, those under thirty years of age averaged 7.4 (some U.S. high school or vocational training), those between thirty and thirty-nine years old averaged 3.9 (almost four years of Laotian schooling), and those over forty years old averaged only 1.9 (almost two years of schooling in Laos).

Other information regarding education is not included in Appendix B but was obtained during the interviews. Nineteen of the respondents could read Hmong, and eighteen could write in their native language. This far exceeded estimates of Hmong literacy found in the literature and may indicate some self-selection among those migrating to the Denver-Boulder area, or among those agreeing to be interviewed.

During the interviews, six of the respondents were observed to have no English skills, five had some English skills, and sixteen others were capable of holding a conversation in English. Many of those with

English skills preferred to answer the questions in Hmong, then to listen to, and often correct, the translator.

When asked if they could speak English as well as they would like, nine of the twenty-one respondents who spoke some English or were fluent in English replied that they did, while twelve did not. Of the six who were non-functional in English, four (aged 49, 58, 60, and 65 -- the four oldest respondents) replied that they were too old to learn a new language, and two (a married couple, aged 34 and 35) replied that they were both too busy and too old to try to learn anything new.

Twenty-three responded that they would like to get more education. Ten were interested in taking more E.S.L. classes, six were interested in vocational courses, four in attaining college degrees, two were unsure, and one was interested in theology.

As previously noted, those with no formal education arrived, on average, at a later date than did those respondents with higher current educational levels. This finding is consistent with those of other studies on the Hmong.

## Family

Respondents were asked to list all of those living in the same dwelling, by relationship, age, and sex. From this, the average household size was calculated to be 5.5 persons, including the respondents. This compares to an average household sixe of 2.67 for the entire U.S. for 1986, and to 3.21 for families (United States Bureau of the Census, 1986).

Male and female respondents averaged household sizes of 5.8 and 4.8 respectively. This difference may have reflected the bias discussed earlier in the small female sample toward female heads of household with no male head of household present. The household size for these households would have been one person smaller.

When the sample was broken down by age groups, those under thirty years old lived in households with an average size of 5.7 persons, those between thirty and thirty-nine averaged 5.0, and those forty and older averaged 5.9. These differences may have been partly explained by a comparison of family composition: more than half of those in the thirty to thirty-nine group lived in nuclear family arrangements, while 77.8% of those under thirty and 88.9% of those forty and over lived in non-nuclear, usually extended family, arrangements. Those in the middle age group were most often parents living with their own children and no other relatives.

Another variable introduced to measure kinship ties was drawn from the survey question "do you live with all of your family that is in this area." Most people had relatives in the area other than those with whom they lived. The exception was respondents under thirty, who would not be expected to have many local relatives if they were recent migrants themselves (see Location section). In general, this variable may show that ties between extended families remain strong, but that they are not so strong as to warrant living in the same dwelling. Since those in the under thirty category have already been shown to reside in non-nuclear families, they may well have used extended family ties to establish themselves in this area. A closer examination of individual cases would be necessary for any meaningful conclusions on this topic.

The average number of children was found to be 3.6, for both males and females as well as overall. This compares to an average of 3.28 children per family for the entire U.S. in 1985 (United States Bureau of the Census, 1986).

When number of children was cross tabulated by age groups, those under thirty averaged 1.2 children, those between thirty and thirty-nine averaged 2.8, and those who were forty or older averaged 6.8. These differences may be partly explained by the fact that those forty and older probably had completed their families, while those in the other two categories had not. That the birth rates for the Hmong in Laos remained high until at least as recently as twenty years ago was evidenced by the fact that respondents of all age groups reported averages of 7.2 to 7.3 children for their mothers.

As one would have expected, the number of children also declined with increased educational level. One would want to interpret this finding with some caution, however, due to the strong inverse relationship, in this sample population, between age and educational level.

Fifteen of the respondents reported having family or relatives in Thai refugee camps, while eleven said that they had none there, and one was unsure. Eighteen reported that they had family or relatives remaining in Laos and five of these, reported having family or relatives in Pathet Lao "re-education camps" (prisons), while another two respondents were unsure of their relatives' status in Laos.

### Housing and Residential Clustering

Twenty of the respondents lived in apartments, while seven lived in single family homes. None of those without formal education lived in single family homes. Those in the thirty to thirty-nine year old age group were less likely to live in a single family home than were the other two age categories, which may be related to that group's low average acculturation value, their relatively low educational level, and the likelihood that they live in nuclear families (with fewer wage-earners).

Of the seven people in single family homes, five (18.5%) were homeowners. Although not a direct comparison, this sharply contrasts to the fact that 64.9% of all U.S. households in 1985 were in owner-occupied units (United States Bureau of the Census, 1986). Only one of the five respondent homeowners was female, and she was married to one of the male respondents. None of the homeowners was in the thirty to thirty-nine age group.

The average number of bedrooms was 2.9, with apartment dwellers averaging 2.7 bedrooms, and those in houses averaging 3.7. Female respondents and those in the middle age category averaged 2.5 and 2.6 bedrooms respectively, reflecting these groups' smaller average household sizes and tendencies to live in apartments.

Monthly housing cost averaged $420.62 overall, approximately 75% of the U.S. average (United States Bureau of the Census, 1986). Respondents in apartments paid $281.80 per month on the average and those in houses $883.33. This wide gap in living expenses may partly be explained by the fact that many of the respondents in apartments lived in government subsidized housing. Housing costs were lower for women and those in the thirty to thirty-nine year old age group. The lowest group average, however, was $180.29 for those with no formal education. Since this group had among the highest percentages of welfare and food stamp recipients, they may also have been more likely to have resided in government subsidized housing.

When asked if they liked the house or apartment where they lived, twenty-four of the twenty-seven interviewed said yes, and yes was the median response for all sub-group, sex, age, and education categories. Only three respondents either disliked or were unsure about liking their current residences. All three of these were male White Hmong. The two that disliked their dwellings were thirty or older and had no U.S. education. One of these was unemployed, and the other made a very low wage. The respondent that was unsure had some college experience and was considering moving to a neighborhood closer to his place of employment.

Respondents were asked why they chose their residence over others in the area. Although this was an open-ended question, only four different responses were given. Fourteen of the respondents said that they chose the unit because it was inexpensive. Six said that they chose it because it was in a nice neighborhood. Four responded that their primary reason was the apartment or house's proximity to their place of employment, whereas only three chose their dwelling because there were other Hmong living in the neighborhood. In light of the finding that twenty-five (92.6%) of the respondents reported that other Hmong live in their neighborhoods, this may have confirmed the researcher's impression that the residential clustering of the Hmong is based more on the spatial distribution of economic factors (e.g. inexpensive housing), than on strong kinship ties as was reported in much of the literature.

## Locational Choice and Migration

Sixteen of the twenty-seven Hmong interviewed were settled in the Denver-Boulder area upon their entrance to the United States. The remaining eleven were originally settled in Nebraska (three), Illinois (three), Kentucky, Pennsylvania, California, Washington, and Minnesota (one each). Denver, however, was the most common original location for all groups in the sample except the Green Hmong, those under thirty years of age, and U.S. high school graduates, which indicated that individuals in those groups were more recent arrivals to this area.

The two groups showing the most migration were the Green Hmong and those with some U.S. high school but no diploma. One half of the Green Hmong and more than half of those with some U.S. high school education had lived somewhere in the U.S. besides their first resettlement area and the Denver-Boulder area. These other places included Montana (two), Michigan (two), California (two), Illinois, North Carolina, South

Carolina, Missouri, Wisconsin, and Minnesota (one each). These findings may indicate that these two groups find that they have the most to gain from a move, and that they may have the best access to information about other locations, as suggested by the human capital model of migration (Clark, 1982).

In order to estimate local mobility, respondents were asked in how many apartments or houses they had lived in the Denver-Boulder area. The average number of local residences for all respondents was 3.4. Women averaged 3.8 residences, slightly higher than the male average of 3.3. Average mobility showed a direct relationship with age, and might have been influenced by the relatively recent arrival of the younger Hmong.

Modal responses to the question "do you plan to stay permanently in Colorado" were either yes or unsure for all categories. Fourteen of all respondents planned on living here permanently, ten were unsure, and only three planned on moving to other states. These results indicate that the Hmong community is fairly happy here, and unlikely to migrate in large numbers.

In comparison to other areas (for example, Nebraska (Meredith, 1983); or Fresno, California (Sonsalla, 1984)) the percentage of Hmong in the sample receiving welfare or food stamps was markedly low. Six (22.2%) of the twenty-seven interviewed received welfare and four (14.8%) received food stamps. No respondents declined to answer these questions.

Kinship ties are important to the Hmong (although the findings of this study suggest that they are less important than implied in the literature), so the location of family members and relatives may also affect migration. For example, a Hmong with family in Colorado but no other close relatives in the United States may be more likely to move to or stay in Colorado than someone with no family here, but family and relatives in other states.

It was discovered that Green Hmong have fewer family members in the area than do White Hmong, and that women average more family members here than do men. (The question was worded so that family members living in the same dwelling were not included in this response.) This variable also seemed to show a direct relationship with age, and may have been a consequence of the fact that the majority of those under thirty years old had moved to this area after being settled elsewhere: most of the Hmong interviewed who were sponsored to this area were sponsored by family members or the American sponsors of family members. Those in the younger age group may have come to the area from their original settlement locations to seek employment.

Eighteen of the respondents reported having relatives in other states. Green Hmong, female, and high school graduate categories were all evenly divided between those having relatives in other states and those not having relatives in other states. Only those with no formal education reported no out of state relatives more than half the time.

These kinship results are ambiguous as predictors of future out-migration by any of the categories examined. Green Hmong were found to have fewer family ties in this area, but also fewer relatives in other states than did White Hmong. Although women averaged more family members in this area than did the men, this was balanced by the women also reporting more relatives outside of the state.

## Acculturation

The responses to several questions regarding lifestyle were coded and summed to arrive at a value for an acculturation index for each refugee interviewed. In this manner, language spoken most often at home, preferred type of food, most often consumed food, television ownership, automobile ownership, driver's license possession, religion, medicine, American friends, English skills, and whether or not they would allow their children to marry non-Hmong were combined into the single variable of acculturation. Each of the above was information given by the respondents, with the exception of English language skills which was noted by the interviewer.

The values of the acculturation index ranged from 5.0 to 14.0, with the larger number representing the most acculturated (by the above standards) refugee. The average value for all cases was 10.6. Sub-group and sex categories showed no major differences: White Hmong averaged 10.6 to the Green Hmong 10.8, and male respondents averaged 10.6 compared to female respondents' 10.5. Figure 7 shows the distribution of group mean scores.

The lowest group mean scores were for those in the thirty to thirty-nine year old age group, and in the no formal education group, 9.9 and 9.6 respectively. The oldest age group and the next lowest educational group, some schooling in Laos, were also low at 10.0 each. The highest group scores were for those under thirty years old, and those with some U.S. high school but no diploma, at 11.8 and 11.9.

Although no clear relationship could be seen between acculturation and age, a relationship was found between acculturation and educational level. Those in groups representing no U.S. education beyond E.S.L. averaged much lower acculturation scores than did those with some U.S. high school or more education.

Besides simple "objective" questions, respondents were also asked to express their opinions on

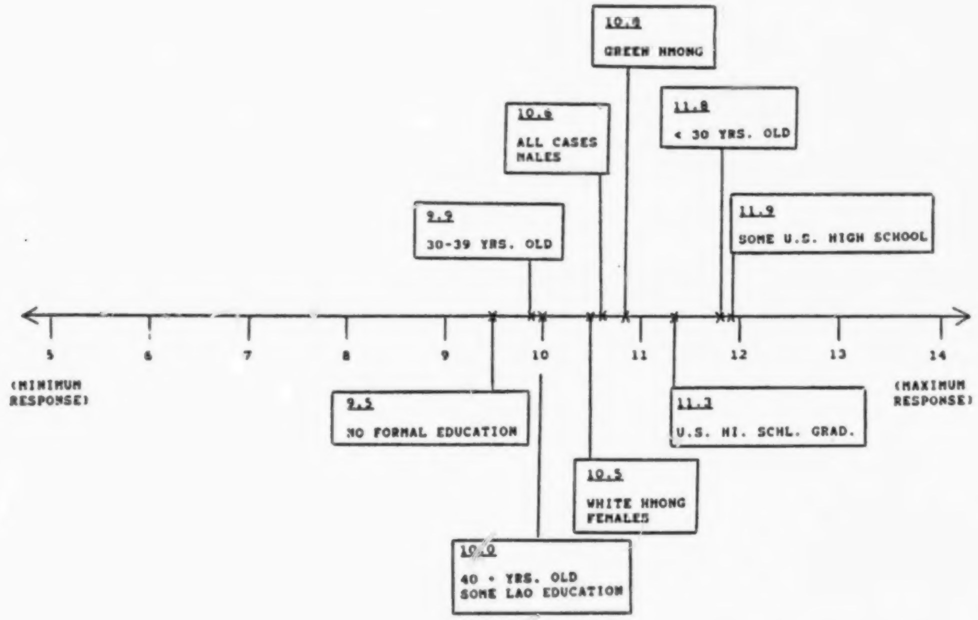

Figure 7. Group mean acculturation scores.

certain topics and their feelings about their life situations. The literature reported that the Hmong, both in Laos and in the U.S., have tried to express group or clan opinions on topics, often coming to an official concensus in private before voicing opinions to outsiders. Bessac and Rainbolt (1978) referred to the difficulty of American researchers in dealing with this behavior.

Whereas some of the respondents may have been exhibiting this behavior by replying "unsure" to most of the opinion questions, the wide range of responses from the rest seemed to preclude any rehearsed or agreed upon answers. That many discussed the questions at great length with both the researcher and the interpreter further implied that they gave individual responses. The possibility of a bias toward what the Hmong community either wished the Anglo community to believe or what the Hmong perceived to be have been the correct or desired answers can nevertheless not be completely ruled out.

When asked the purposely ambiguous question "should the Hmong try to be more like Americans," twelve of the respondents said yes, thirteen said that they were unsure, and two said no. The two that replied in the negative were both male White Hmong under forty years old, one of whom had some schooling in Laos but none in the U.S., and the other had some U.S. college education. The modal response was unsure for all categories except males, those thirty to thirty-nine, and those with some U.S. high school education but no diploma. These groups most often replied they thought that the Hmong should become more like Americans.

At the time of the interviews, three of the respondents had become U.S. citizens, and twenty of the rest planned to become citizens. All three of the citizens were in the thirty to thirty-nine age group, even though this age group had the lowest mean acculturation score. Less surprising, this group lives in the most "American" household type (nuclear family).

When asked "do you think that the Hmong traditions will be able to continue in the United State," twelve of those interviewed responded yes, seven responded that they were unsure, and eight said no. The median response was unsure for all groups, expect for those forty years and older, those with some U.S. high school but no diploma (more than half of these groups replied yes), and the U.S. high school graduates (half of whom felt that the Hmong traditions would not be able to continue here).

A large majority (twenty-four, or 88.9%) of the refugees interviewed said that they would like to visit Laos, if they could do so peaceably. Only one respondent said that he wouldn't want to visit Laos, and two were unsure.

On the other hand, only ten (37.0%) said that they would consider moving back to Laos permanently if they could do so peaceably, whereas ten were unsure and seven said that they would not. The only group in which unsure was not the modal response was the middle age group where over half replied that they would return. This finding corresponded to a particularly low mean acculturation value for that group, as well as to low life satisfaction scores.

Twenty-two (81.5%) of the respondents felt that their lives were better than three or four years ago, whereas three said that theirs' were the same, and two replied that theirs' were worse. The two who felt that their lives were worse were both male, forty or older, and had no U.S. education. The three who felt that their lives were the same were all White Hmong, over thirty years old, and had no education in the U.S., but two were female, and one was male. The median response for all categories, however, was that life is better now.

Respondents were asked to rate how satisfied they were with their lives at the present. Twelve replied that they were satisfied, five that they were somewhat satisfied, four were unsure, and six were dissatisfied. Those most likely to be dissatisfied were White Hmong males over thirty years old with no U.S. education. The only group not to have a median response of satisfied or somewhat satisfied were again the thirty to thirty-nine year old age group, in which three were dissatisfied with their lives and two were unsure.

Reluctance to speculate on the future was shown by seventeen of the respondents who said that they were unsure about their expectations. Five expected their future to be very good, four said good, and one said moderately good. Of the five who were most optimistic, four were White Hmong, four were male, three were under thirty years old, and three were high school graduates. The unsure respondents were most often White Hmong, women, those over thirty, those with no formal education, and those with some Lao education, but no U.S. education. No one expected the future to be bad.

## Discussion

The data from this sample of Hmong refugees both supported and refuted the research hypotheses specified earlier. The following four sections examine the findings regarding each of the major hypotheses.

### Satisfaction Hypothesis: the situation of the Hmong has improved only marginally since studies conducted in the early 1980s -- although over the initial culture shock, many respondents were expected to feel that their education, employment, and housing remained unsatisfactory.

Although 85.2% of the respondents were interested in getting more education, 75.0% of those employed were satisfied with their current employment and 88.9% were satisfied with their current dwellings.

81.5% of the sample felt that life was better than three or four years ago, and 63.0% were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their present lives. 63.0% were reluctant to speculate on their futures, but the remaining 37.0% felt that the future would be either moderately good, good, or very good. No one responded that the future would be bad.

These positive opinions strongly refute the hypothesis. All indications point to the fact that the members of this sample population are much more satisfied with their situations than they were several years ago. This is in accord with Michelson's (1977) finding that most Americans are satisfied with where they are, and that they view what they have as being appropriate for their situation, and may reflect an aspect of their acculturation.

Acculturation Hypothesis: few respondents were expected to have adopted many American ways, and residential clustering was expected.

Acculturation. Individual scores on the acculturation index ranged from 5.0 to 14.0. The mean response was 10.6, with means for sub-group, sex, age, and educational level all clustered around that score (see Figure 7).

The results of this analysis of this index must be interpreted with caution, since the index shows only part of a continuum which had possible scores of 0.0 to 21.0. In percentage form, the highest score thus represented a person who was 66.7% acculturated on this scale: the overall mean score of 10.6 represented someone who was 50.5% acculturated.

The average score, therefore, represented a group only half acculturated (in terms of the variables used here), even though they had averaged eight years in the United States. While this sounds like a low score, the same index would have to be applied to other immigrant or refugee groups or to the native born population for a comparative study: the results of this analysis were therefore ambiguous.

That the younger Hmong (those under thirty) were the least likely to say that the Hmong should try to be more like Americans seems to imply that this generation of Hmong will retain their culture rather than becoming totally acculturated.

Conversations beyond the survey interviews with several Hmong in this age group revealed that while they want their children to do well at school, they teach them only Hmong customs and values at home. Although 11.1% of those sampled said that they would not allow their children to marry non-Hmong, many of the others commented that, even though they would allow their children to marry whomever they wished, they hoped that they would marry Hmong because only another Hmong could understand their feelings.

These findings support the geographic interpretation of ethnicity as being a "negotiable identity, rather than simply as a reflection of innate characteristics" (Jackson and Smith, 1981, p. 9). In this manner, the Hmong appear to define some of their cultural traits as being more easily compromised than others. For example, the long established custom of marrying only other Hmong seems to be negotiable.

Residential Clustering. Only 11.1% of the respondents listed living near other Hmong as their main reason for choosing their current dwelling, whereas 92.6% reported that there were other Hmong in their neighborhoods. Half said that they chose their present residences primarily because they were inexpensive.

These findings indicate that while residential clustering occurs among this group, it is the result of the constraints of economic forces and information exchange rather than a choice to live near other Hmong. Several respondents who were relatively more acculturated than were others said that they would prefer to live in areas where there were no other Hmong firstly because they were often expected to act as translators or counsellors for their less-acculturated neighbors, and secondly because they felt it would be easier for their families to adjust if they lived in more "American" surroundings. That the clustering is the result of economics is further supported by the observation that over half of those interviewed lived in low income housing complexes.

Previous studies on the Hmong appear to have presumed that the Hmong are clustered because it is their choice, whereasthe findings of this study leans toward an economic interpretation. This illustrates the classic social geography choice verses constraint debate. Clearly, elements of both forces may be present in any individual situation, and the magnitude of the forces different (Peach and Smith, 1981). The inportance placed on the conflict between choice and constraint is not without its critics, yet it does promote a closer examination of the role of the state (Jackson and Smith, 1981), and is a fruitful topic for further research on the Hmong.

Generational Hypothesis: generational differences in responses were expected. Younger Hmong might have found it easier to adapt.

This hypothesis was tested by cross tabulating results with age groups. Three age categories were used: those respondents under thirty, those between thiry and thirty-nine, and those forty and older. Figure 8 shows the outcome of that effort.

The chart shows that those respondents under thirty had the largest percentage that were homeowners, the highest average educational level, the highest average acculturation index value, the highest percentage of people satisfied with their lives, and the highest percentage that expected their future to be moderately good, good, or very good. In spite of lower citizenship rates, moderate unemployment and wages, and

|  | AGE GROUP |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | < 30 | 30 - 39 | 40+ |
| U.S. CITIZEN | 0.0% | 33.3% | 0.0% |
| UNEMPLOYMENT RATE | 11.1% | 11.1% | 22.2% |
| HOURLY WAGE | $7.52 | $7.34 | $9.26 |
| IN SINGLE FAMILY HOMES | 33.3% | 11.1% | 33.3% |
| NO. OF BEDROOMS | 2.9 | 2.6 | 3.3 |
| MO. HOUSING COSTS | $450.00 | $365.00 | $450.11 |
| HOME OWNERS | 33.3% | 0.0% | 22.2 |
| HOUSEHOLD TYPE=NUCLEAR | 22.2% | 55.6% | 11.1% |
| EDUCATIONAL LEVEL | 7.4 | 3.9 | 1.9 |
| ACCULTURATION INDEX | 11.8 | 9.9 | 10.0 |
| PLAN TO STAY IN COLO. | 55.6% | 44.4% | 55.6% |
| WOULD LIKE TO MOVE BACK TO LAOS | 11.1% | 55.6% | 44.4% |
| SATISFIED OR SOMEWHAT SATISFIED WITH LIFE | 77.8% | 44.4% | 66.7% |
| EXPECT FUTURE TO BE MODERATELY GOOD, GOOD, OR VERY GOOD | 55.6% | 33.3% | 22.2% |

Figure 8. Selected results cross tabulated by age.

fairly high housing costs, this youngest age group does appear to be the most successful in adapting to the U.S. Their high educational level may play an important role in their acculturation.

An unexpected finding of this analysis, however, is that the middle age group so often had dissimilar responses to the other two groups. Those in the thirty to thirty-nine year old category had the highest percentage that were U.S. citizens, the lowest wage, was least likely to be in single family homes, had the least average number of bedrooms, the lowest average monthly housing costs, no homeowners, the largest percentage of respondents in nuclear families, the lowest acculturation value (although closely followed by the forty and older group), had the lowest percentage that plan to stay permanently in Colorado, the largest percentage that would like to move back to Laos, and the lowest percentage of those satisfied or moderately satisfied with their present lives.

Those in the forty years old and older category had the highest unemployment rate, but once those over sixty years of age were removed the rate was the same as for those under thirty. Although those in this group averaged fewer in nuclear families, the lowest educational level, and the most uncertainty about their future, they nevertheless were paid the highest wages.

Only one of the long list of findings on the middle age group were positive: that they had the largest percentage that were U.S. citizens. That this group was having the most difficult time in adjusting appears evident.

This hypothesis that generational differences in responses would occur was supported by the analysis of the results. As expected, younger Hmong seem to be the most acculturated. It was, however, surprising to discover that those between thirty and thirty-nine years old were having relatively more difficulties in adjusting than were those forty years and older. This finding merits further research.

Migration Hypothesis: many respondents might be considering a move to another Hmong community in the U.S., or might wish that they could peacefully return to Laos.

This hypothesis had two distinct parts: migration within the United States, and migration back to Laos. The first section was tested by the responses to the questions of where the respondents were first settled and how many other places they had lived (to get an idea of former migration), and by their response to the direct question of whether they planned to stay permanently in Colorado.

59.3% of the Hmong interviewed were originally settled in the Denver-Boulder area, and 44.4% of the sample had never lived elsewhere. Just over half (51.9%) of the respondents said that they planned to stay Colorado, 11.1% did not plan on staying, and the rest were unsure. These responses show that the Hmong in the sample are, for the most part, satisfied with the Denver-Boulder area, and that no large scale migration out of the area should be expected.

The second portion of the migration hypothesis refered to the anticipated desire of many respondents to return to Laos if they could do so peacefully. This was tested with two questions, one of which asked about visiting, and the other about making a permanent move back to Laos. Whereas 88.9% said that they would like to visit Laos, only 37.0% were interested in relocating. Those in the thirty to thirty-nine year old age group were the only group in which over half replied that they would like to return.

This hypothesis, that many respondents might be considering moving to another area or returning to Laos was, therefore, not supported by the data. The sample shows a certain satisfaction with the area, and a reluctance to consider moving back to Laos. If these respondents are self-selected on the basis of literacy, these results may be indicative of the satisfaction levels of the more educated Hmong group. Further research is necessary to confirm or refute this bias.

## Incidental Findings

As is the case in most research projects, interesting information was learned outside of the formal survey data collection and analyses. Although many of these incidental findings are subjective in nature, they nevertheless are of value in understanding the Hmong, and for indicating useful directions for future research.

## Present Situation in Laos

Most respondents were unwilling to discuss the current affairs of their former home, and others (especially the elderly) declined being interviewed because they feared it would lead to discussions of lost loved ones and homes. Only one respondent with relatives in a Laotian prison was willing to discuss what he knew, and he reported executions, dismemberments, and general conditions of malnutrition and abuse. He also mentioned reports of Hmong women forced into prostitution for the Pathet Lao soldiers. His brother, who was not interviewed, showed photographs of family farming in Laos: malnutrition was evident and clothing in short supply. Although the photographs were only a few years old, many of the people in them had died.

## White Hmong and Green Hmong

When respondents were asked to which color sub-group they belonged, the large majority was surprised that I would even know that there were sub-groups, and they often giggled at the question. The interpreter translated several comments about there no longer being any real differences between the groups.

Although one refugee expert had the impression that White Hmong were under-represented in the area and that Green Hmong were the majority, the sample showed a majority of White Hmong. When several Hmong of different sub-groups were questioned about the proportions of sub-groups in the area, they all replied that they thought that White Hmong predominated. Several of the survey findings may explain this discrepancy. The Green Hmong have apparently been in this area for a shorter period of time, and were more likely to receive welfare or foodstamps than were the White Hmong interviewed. The Green Hmong may, therefore, simply be more visible to the local agencies.

## Local Hmong Network

Through my contacts with Lao Family Community (L.F.C.), it soon became apparent that the Hmong spoken to were very conscious of the importance of networking. The Hmong living in inner city Denver who had been the victims of recent crime were apparently not using any of the resources which were available to them and, although pitied, they were also somewhat ridiculed by the others.

I used the local network for my research. This use included discussing the project at length with the president of L.F.C. and employing his brother as my translator; it proved beneficial. Several Hmong who were asked for interviews first confirmed with L.F.C. that my work was legitimate before agreeing to meet with me. It is unknown to what extent this may have biased the sample.

Although some sources (Bessac and Bessac, 1982; Aylesworth, 1987) had mentioned the difficulty of researchers in dealing with political maneuvering between clan leaders (that individuals from one clan would not agree to participate if other clans' leaders were involved), I did not witness this phenomenon. Instead, I sensed a spirit of cooperation and caring between the Hmong of all clans.

The Denver-Boulder community is small enough that most Hmong know each other, yet the researcher never heard a Hmong make a disparaging comment about another Hmong who operated within the local network. The Hmong leader interviewed explained that all of the local leaders get together periodically (every month at first, but now only once or twice per year) to discuss common problems. Li (1981) noted the same cooperation within the Denver area, and suggested that smaller Hmong communities may tend to have stronger organization than do larger ones.

### Family Life for Working Couples with Children

Many of the respondents' households included working couples with children. In most cases, the parents worked different shifts so that they could share the child rearing responsibilities and save day care expenses. Grandparents were often present, playing with the children.

Both mothers and fathers were strict but very loving with their children. It was not uncommon for a male respondent to bounce a small child on his knee during the entire interview, or to discuss his feeling on Hmong political issues while rocking a cradle with his foot.

The literature on traditional Hmong family life and child rearing in Laos does not mention male interaction of this sort, but it has been reported by others in the U.S. (for example, Bessac and Rainbolt, 1978). It is not clear whether this is a characteristic Hmong custom, or whether it has developed out of the economic need to share child care responsibilities in the United States, or possibly because family members cling more closely to each other in this socially unfamilar environment.

### Future Assimilation

Although the younger Hmong expressed desires similar to those of Americans of the same ages, they nevertheless stated that they would keep many of the Hmong ways that they felt were better than American customs. An example is child rearing practices: several expressed displeasure with the behavior of American children (and their parents) in public.

At the end of interviews, I was often asked questions regarding employment opportunities or classes for the citizenship test. That they were eager to find out more information, to become citizens, and to make contacts with Americans reinforces the idea that many Hmong are ready to assimilate.

On the other hand, some outward appearances of acculturation may be misleading. For example, many respondents stated that although they used American medicine, they would have prefered to use Hmong remedies if the necessary herbs were available locally. Most apparently continued to go to shamans for minor treatments, even though they primarily practiced American medicine. Several stated that they felt that they had received very poor treatment from American medical professionals, which is not unlikely because of their low incomes.

These findings lead the researcher to believe that, as a group, the Hmong will assimilate slowly into American society. This belief is partially based on the wide distance between the two cultures, and partially on the observed resistance of the Hmong to a culture that they don't feel is superior to theirs. In addition, the local ethnic networks are one of the Hmong strengths and their tendency is to keep the Hmong together which will slow down assimilation.

# CHAPTER V

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This final chapter offers a summary of the thesis and its findings, suggests some conclusions that can be drawn from the study, and offers policy recommendations and suggestions for future research.

### Summary

#### Purpose

Few studies on the Hmong in the United States have approached their situation from either an ethnographic or geographic point of view. This thesis was an initial investigation of the satisfaction levels, migration, acculturation, residential clustering, and generational differences of the Hmong refugees from Laos at a local scale.

#### Methodology

Three local professionals who work closely with the Hmong, including a Hmong leader, were interviewed. They provided helpful information and suggestions for proceeding with the study.

A survey instrument was developed and an English-Hmong translator was hired to help put the survey questions into a Hmong cultural perspective, to make the initial contacts with the target interviewees, and to translate during the interviews.

A random sample was chosen from those Hmong with listed telephone numbers. Twenty-four individuals were contacted and interviewed from this sample list. Since women were under-represented, three additional Hmong women who were not on the list were added to the sample.

Respondents were then interviewed at their convenience. Steps were taken to make the meetings as non-threatening as possible. A copy of the final survey instrument was included as Appendix A.

Responses to questions were coded and entered as variables and categories into a statistical analysis. Appendix B contains the detailed tabulated responses from the interviews.

## Analysis of the Data

The data collected during the interviews was broken into the areas of particular interest for analysis. These categories included personal information, employment, education, family, housing and residential clustering, locational choice and migration, and acculturation.

Personal Information. The sample was of nineteen male and eight female adult Hmong in the Denver-Boulder area. Consistent with other studies (for example, Hendricks, 1985; Olney, 1986), most of the respondents arrived in the U.S. in 1979 or 1980, and had averaged approximately two years in Thai refugee camps. Those who arrived later averaged lower current educational levels.

Employment. Twenty of the respondents were employed, and their average hourly wage was $7.75. Average wages were 71.9% higher for males, and women were found to have been in the work force for a shorter period of time. Fifteen of the twenty employed respondents were satisfied with their jobs. The overall rate of unemployment for all respondents was 14.8%.

Education. The average level of education was 4.4 years of schooling in Laos, although the average respondent under thirty years old had had some U.S. high school or vocational training. Women and those in the forty and older category were the least educated respondents.

Nineteen (70.4%) were literate in Hmong. Sixteen (59.3%) of the respondents were observed to be fluent in English, five knew some English, and five had no apparent English skills.

*Family*. Average household size was 5.5 persons with female respondents averaging one less person than male respondents. Interviewees averaged 3.6 children. Those in the thiry to thirty-nine age group averaged smaller households than did those in the other two age categories, reflecting nuclear family living arrangements for this middle age group. While kinship ties were observed to be strong, extended families did not necessarily desire to live together.

Fifteen of those Hmong interviewed had family members or relatives in Thai refugee camps, eighteen had family or relatives in Laos, and five reported that they had family or relatives in Pathet Lao prisons.

*Housing and Residential Clustering*. Twenty respondents lived in apartments and seven lived in single family homes. Five of the seven in single family homes were homeowners, but only one of the homeowners was female, and none were thirty to thirty-nine years old.

Respondents averaged 2.9 bedrooms, with apartment dwellers averaging 2.7 bedrooms and those in single family homes 3.7. Monthly housing costs averaged $420.62 with those in apartments averaging $281.00 and those in single family units $883.33. The apartment costs were persumed to reflect a large percentage of respondents living in government subsidized housing.

Twenty-four of the twenty-seven were satisfied with their housing. Roughly half chose their dwellings for economic reasons.

Locational Choice and Migration. Sixteen of the Hmong sampled were settled in the Denver-Boulder area upon their arrival in the United States. Green Hmong, those under thirty, and U.S. high school graduates were more likely to have migrated to the area after having been first settled elsewhere. Although the survey did not explicitly ask respondents why they had moved to this area, those who were questioned replied that they had moved here to unite with family or because they thought that they would find employment here.

Local mobility was measured by the number of different dwellings occupied in this area. The overall average was 3.4 units, with Green Hmong, women, and older respondents averaging slightly more.

Fourteen respondents planned to stay in Colorado permanently, ten were unsure, and three planned on moving to other states. This seems to indicate that the Hmong community is fairly pleased with this location, and unlikely to migrate elsewhere in large numbers.

Acculturation. The acculturation index showed no major differences in average values by sub-group or sex. Lowest mean scores were for those with no formal education and those between thirty and thirty-nine. Highest scores were for those with some U.S. high school (but no diploma) and those under thirty years old. It is interesting that acculturation varies with education, but not with sex, even though education and sex are negatively related.

Twelve of those interviewed thought that the Hmong should try to be more like Americans, thirteen were unsure, and two said no. Only three of the respondents, however, had become U.S. citizens. Those interviewed were largely unsure that Hmong traditions would be able to continue in the United States.

Eighty-eight and nine-tenths percent said that they would like to visit Laos if they could do so peacefully, but only 37.0% said that they would consider moving back. 81.5% felt that their lives in the U.S. were better than three or four years ago, and 63.0% were either satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their lives at the present. When asked about their expectations for the future, no one in the sample replied that they expected it to be bad.

## Hypotheses

The hypothesis that the situation of the Hmong had improved only marginally since the early 1980's was refuted by the data. Four of every five respondents were satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their present lives, and that their lives are better now than three or four years ago.

The expectations that (a) few respondents had adopted many American ways, and that (b) the Hmong were residentially clustered, were supported by the data. According to the acculturation index used, the sample population was only approximately half acculturated to American society. All but two of those interviewed lived in neighborhoods with other Hmong, though this seems to be a matter of economics rather than ethnicity.

Generational differences in responses were expected, and found. Surprisingly, the middle age group (those between thirty and thirty-nine) apparently had the most difficult time adjusting. Perhaps this is because of the relatively large percentage of this group in nuclear families and the fewer adult ties into the local network per household.

The hypothesis that many respondents might be considering a move to another Hmong community in the United States, or might wish that they could peacefully return to Laos was not supported by the data. Those interviewed showed satisfaction with the Denver-Boulder area, and a reluctance to move permanently back to Laos.

## Recommendations

There is a large amount of accepted misinformation about the Hmong. This not only angers the Hmong, but leads to misunderstandings by the local community and may bias some policy decisions.

Coloradan policy makers should be aware that the local Hmong Community is doing well, and that many of the Hmong here now will probably stay. From all indications, more are likely to arrive as they hear through the Hmong network that it is a good place for them to find jobs (even if they don't speak English). Hmong elsewhere with family here may be the most likely new migrants, so efforts to help the new arrivals might focus on those already here. As more Hmong become citizens, they will undoubtedly sponsor more family members and relatives now in Thai camps, so Coloradan refugee services might expect a new wave of first settlement.

Social workers, refugee agencies, and the Hmong themselves should be aware that those thirty to thirty-nine years old are having the most difficult time adjusting to the United States. This is shown by their low wages, housing, acculturation scores, satisfaction level, plans not to remain in Colorado, and desire to return to Laos. The causes for this phenomenon may be rooted in previous programs that reached out to Hmong youth or to the elderly, and overlooked this middle age group. Maybe the nuclear family, while apparently more Americanized, limits the contacts of those in the middle age group and actually leaves them less able to acculturate. Future programs should target this group to aid in their adjustment.

Educational programs, such as E.S.L. and vocational training, remain very much in demand and should continue to be a program priority. Classes to prepare for the citizenship test are now in demand also, as is some means of community integration (many respondents had never talked to an American in a social context). Career counseling for adults as well as teenagers is needed.

Because many Hmong try to avoid the social stigma of dealing with public services, refugee services may wish to consider turning over some responsibilities to these mutual assistance associations. Although they don't serve all of the local Hmong, they do serve a large proportion, and provide the Hmong with an effective means of self-help.

This study, however, was not able to examine the Hmong outside of the ethnic network because of their adversion to strangers. This group may require additional services.

The Hmong in the sample have thus far acculturated only as much as they have seen to be to their benefit. This resistance to acculturation appears to be deep rooted, but may be slowly changing as evidenced by the numbers of respondents planning on becoming United States citizens. Faster acculturation should not be "pushed" on the Hmong, because their sense of independence might cause them to rebel. Welfare dependency and the attached stigma may follow them for generations, especially if the teenagers continue traditional early family patterns and high drop out rates for school.

## Future Research

Further research on the Hmong is needed not only to gather much-needed information about them, but to continue to monitor their situation in the United States. Studies using similar acculturation indices for other immigrant or refugee groups, Hmong in other areas, or other segments of U.S. society would provide a good basis for comparison.

Other issues worth examining include: why are those Hmong between thirty and thirty-nine years old having more difficulty in their adjustment? why didn't the inner city Hmong we contacted use the ethnic network? Are these groups less successful in coping with the United States? Do they acculturate in different ways and at different rates?

The predictions herein regarding future local migration (many Hmong here now will stay, and others currently in the U.S. or in Thailand may also find it to be an attractive location) should be checked in three or four years to test their value. How many Hmong will remain or move to the area? Will their satisfaction continue, and what factors will affect it? Will they continue to be residentially clustered? Will the roles of the mutual assistance associations and the ethnic network have altered? Will the Hmong become more acculturated despite their resistance?

## Conclusion

> . . . the right to refuge, unlike many other rights, is one that is necessitated by the tragedy and evil of the world . . . . As such, all of as to some extent participate in this tragedy and evil as agents as well as victims. But we are not powerless to affect change because of this. Perhaps it is too much to hope that someday this right will become just an unpleasant memory; one, however, that we should never forget (Pielke, 1979, p. 12.).

The Hmong refugees from Laos seem to be over the initial trauma of resettlement, and may be at a turning point in their adjustment to life in the United States. The responsibility of the United States to its former allies did not end when they crossed the border, nor is it sufficient to have offered some limited educational opportunities. It is necessary for us to recognize our full responsibilities in relation to the Hmong and to provide them with the necessary resources to help themselves not only to survive, but to thrive in our country.

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# APPENDIX A - HMONG SURVEY

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

Age ____________ Sex ______________ Marital Status ____________

(White, Green, etc.)
Clan ______________________ Sub-group (Color) ________________

Time spent (if any) in Thai refugee camp ______________________

Year that came to United States _______________________________

Are you a U.S. citizen? yes _______ no ______

If not, do you plan on becoming one? yes ___ no ___ unsure

Why or why not? ________________________________________

EMPLOYMENT - Are you currently employed? yes _______ no _______

If no, are you a) a housewife or mother? yes ____ no ____

b) retired? yes ____ no ____

c) unable to work? yes ____ no ____

(please specify why ____________________

________________________________________

If yes, number of hours per week ____________________________

Wages $__________ per _____________________________

Type of employment _______________________________

Length of time at this employer ___________________

Types of previous employment in the U.S. _________

___________________________________________________

Are you satisfied with your current job?

yes ______ no _______

Please explain _______________________________

___________________________________________________

What was your job in Laos? ________________________

EDUCATION - Amount of schooling in Laos ______________________

Amount of schooling in Thailand ____________________

Amount of schooling in U.S. ______________________

What languages did you speak before coming to the United States? ____________________________

____________________________________________

Can you read Hmong? yes _____ no ______

If yes, could you before coming to the U.S.?

yes _____ no ______

Can you write in Hmong? yes _____ no ______

If yes, could you before coming to the U.S.?

yes _____ no ______

Do you speak English as well as you would like?

yes _____ no ______

Can you read and write in English?

read - yes __________ no ______________

write - yes __________ no ______________

Would you like to get more education? yes ____ no ____

If yes, what kind of education? ______________

________________________________________

HOUSEHOLD - Please list the relationships and ages of those living in the same apartment or house

Relationship Age Sex

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

________________________________________

If female:

How many children do you have? ____________________

How many children did your mother have? __________

If male:

How many wives have you had? ____________________

How many children do you have by each wife? ______

__________________________________________________

How many children did your mother have? __________

All:

Do you live with all of your family that is in this area? yes ___________ no ____________

Do you want to live with them? yes _______ no _____

Why or why not? ________________________________

__________________________________________________

Do you have family members in Thai camps?

yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

Do you have family members in Laos?

yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

If yes, are they in a re-education camp?

yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

HOUSING - Do you live in a 1) apartment ____________________

2) house ________________________

3) other (specify) ______________

Do you own or rent? ______________________________

Number of bedrooms ________________________________

Approximately how much do you pay per month for rent (or mortgage) and utilities? $ __________

Do you like the apartment or house where you live now? yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

Why or why not? ________________________________

________________________________________________

Why did you choose to live in this apartment or house rather than some other? ________________________

________________________________________________

LOCATION - Was Denver-Boulder the first area in the U.S. where you were settled? yes ________ no ________

If yes, why here? ________________________________

If no, where were you first settled? ________

Have you lived other places in the U.S.?

yes ______ no ______

If yes, in which other cities or states (please list all of them) ________________________

________________________________________________

________________________________________________

In how many different places have you lived in the Denv-Boulder area? ________________________

Do other Hmong live in your neighborhood?

yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

Do you plan to permanently stay in this area?

yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

If no, how long do you think that you will stay here? ________________________

What other places in the U.S. would be good places to live? ________________________

________________________________________________

Do you or your family receive either of the following?:

Welfare - yes _____ no _____ unsure _____

Food Stamps - yes _____ no _____ unsure _____

How many of your family members live in Colorado, but not in the same house? ______________________

Do you have family in states other than Colorado?

yes _____ no _____ unsure _____

If yes, where do they live? ____________________

________________________________________________

ACCULTURATION - What language do you speak most often at home?

Hmong ____ English ____ Other (specify)_________

Do you prefer to eat Hmong or American food?

Hmong _________ American _________

Which kind of food do you eat most often?

Hmong _________ American _________

Do you own a television? yes _______ no ______

Do you own a car? yes _______ no ______

Do you have a driver's licence? yes ______ no ______

Do you and your family practice the "Hmong way," the "American way" or a combination of both for religion?

"Hmong way" ____ "American way" ____ Both ____

... for medicine?

"Hmong way" ____ "American way" ____ Both ____

Has anyone in your family married a non-Hmong since coming to the U.S.? yes _____ no ____ unsure ____

If unmarried: Would you consider marrying a non-Hmong yourself?

yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

All: Would you allow your sons to marry non-Hmong?

yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

Would you allow your daughters to marry non-Hmong?

yes ______ no ______ unsure ______

Do you have any American friends? yes ______ no ______

If yes, how many? ________________________________

Where did you meet them? __________________________

________________________________________________________

Do you think that the Hmong should try to be more like

Americans? yes _______ no _______ unsure ________

Please explain ____________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Do you think that the Hmong traditions will be able to

continue in the U.S.? yes ____ no ____ unsure ____

Please explain ____________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

Do you feel that life is better for you now than it was

three or four years ago? yes ____ no ____ unsure ___

Please explain ____________________________________

________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________

If you could do so peaceably, would you like to visit Laos?

yes ____ no ____ unsure ____

If you could do so peaceably, would you move back to Laos?

yes ____ no ____ unsure ____

Why or why not? ________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________

Which of the following would you say best describes your satisfaction with your life at this time?

very satisfied
satisfied
somewhat satisfied
unsure
somewhat dissatisfied
dissatisfied
very dissatisfied

Which of the following would you say best describes your expectations for your future?

very good
good
moderately good
unsure
moderately bad
bad
very bad

Is there anything else which you would like to discuss?

THANK YOU FOR TAKING THE TIME TO ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS!

# APPENDIX B - DATA TABLES

## PERSONAL INFORMATION

| | All | Wht.Hm. | Gr.Hm. | Male | Female | <30 Yrs. | 30 - 39 | 40+ Yrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Yrs. in Thai Camp | 2.2 | 2.2 | 2.4 | 2.3 | 2.1 | 1.7 | 2.8 | 2.2 |
| Mean Age | 35.5 | 36.0 | 30.5 | 34.4 | 38.3 | 23.9 | 33.3 | 49.3 |
| Male:Female | 19:8 | 15:6 | 4:2 | - | - | 8:1 | 5:4 | 6:3 |
| % Married | 74.1% | 81.0% | 50.0% | 89.5% | 37.5% | 66.7% | 77.8% | 77.8% |
| % Green Hmong | 22.2% | - | - | 21.1% | 25.0% | 33.3% | 11.1% | 22.2% |
| Median Yr. came to U.S. | 1979 | 1979 | 1979/1980 | 1979 | 1979 | 1979 | 1979 | 1979 |
| % U.S. Citizens | 11.1% | 14.3% | 0.0% | 10.5% | 12.5% | 0.0% | 33.3% | 0.0% |

| | No Educ. | Some Lao | Some U.S.H.S. | U.S.H.S. Grad. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Yrs. in Thai Camp | 2.1 | 2.2 | 2.8 | 1.5 |
| Mean Age | 46.3 | 38.9 | 27.6 | 23.0 |
| Male:Female | 3:4 | 6:3 | 7:0 | 3:1 |
| % Married | 71.4% | 77.8% | 71.4% | 75.0% |
| % Green Hmong | 28.6% | 11.1% | 28.6% | 25.0% |
| Median Yr. came to U.S. | 1980 | 1979 | 1979 | 1979/1980 |
| % U.S. Citizens | 0.0% | 11.1% | 28.6% | 0.0% |

## EMPLOYMENT

| | All | Wht.Hm. | Gr.Hm. | Male | Female | <30 Yrs. | 30 - 39 | 40+ Yrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Hourly Wage | $7.75 | $7.73 | $7.87 | $8.60 | $5.00 | $7.52 | $7.34 | $9.26 |
| Mean Yrs. at Employer | 3.7 | 3.9 | 2.5 | 4.4 | 1.6 | 2.7 | 4.2 | 4.2 |
| % Unemployment | 14.8 | 9.5 | 33.3 | 21.1 | 0.0 | 11.1 | 11.1 | 22.2 |
| Job Satisfaction: | | | | | | | | |
| % Satisfied | 75.0% | 76.2% | 100.0% | 73.3% | 80.0% | 71.4% | 77.8% | 75.0% |
| % Dissatisfied | 20.0% | 19.1% | 0.0% | 20.0% | 20.0% | 28.6% | 11.1% | 25.0% |
| % Unsure | 5.0% | 4.8% | 0.0% | 6.7% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 11.1% | 0.0% |

| | No Educ. | Some Lao | Some U.S.H.S. | U.S.H.S. Grad. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Hourly Wage | $5.05 | $8.32 | $8.78 | $7.45 |
| Mean Yrs. at Employer | 2.6 | 3.5 | 5.5 | 1.3 |
| % Unemployment | 28.6 | 11.1 | 14.3 | 0.0 |
| Job Satisfaction: | | | | |
| % Satisfied | 75.0% | 71.4% | 83.3% | 66.7% |
| % Dissatisfied | 0.0% | 28.6% | 16.7% | 33.3% |
| % Unsure | 25.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% |

## EDUCATION

| | All | Wht.Hm. | Gr.Hm. | Male | Female | <30 Yrs. | 30 - 39 | 40+ Yrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Highest Educ. Level | 4.4 | 4.4 | 4.3 | 5.5 | 1.9 | 7.4 | 3.9 | 1.9 |

## HOUSEHOLD INFORMATION

| | All | Wht.Hm. | Gr.Hm. | Male | Female | <30 Yrs. | 30 - 39 | 40+ Yrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Household Size | 5.5 | 5.5 | 5.5 | 5.8 | 4.8 | 5.7 | 5.0 | 5.9 |
| Mean No. of Children | 3.6 | 3.5 | 3.8 | 3.6 | 3.6 | 1.2 | 2.8 | 6.8 |
| Mean No. Mother's Children | 7.3 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 7.3 | 7.2 | 7.3 | 7.3 |
| % in Nuclear Families | 29.6% | 28.6% | 33.3% | 36.8% | 12.5% | 22.2% | 55.6% | 11.1% |
| % that Live with All of Family in the Area | 33.3% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 36.8% | 25.0% | 66.7% | 22.2% | 11.1% |
| % with Relatives in Thai Camps | 55.6% | 61.9% | 33.3% | 52.6% | 62.5% | 55.6% | 44.4% | 66.7% |
| % with Relatives in Laos | 66.7% | 71.4% | 50.0% | 68.4% | 62.5% | 66.7% | 66.7% | 66.7% |
| % with Relatives in Laotian Prison | 18.5% | 19.0% | 16.7% | 10.5% | 37.5% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 33.3% |

| | No Educ. | Some Lao | Some U.S.H.S. | U.S.H.S. Grad. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Household Size | 3.6 | 6.8 | 6.1 | 5.0 |
| Mean No. of Children | 5.1 | 4.8 | 2.3 | 0.5 |
| Mean No. Mother's Children | 7.6 | 6.9 | 7.3 | 7.8 |
| % in Nuclear Families | 28.6% | 33.3% | 42.9% | 0.0% |
| % that Live with All of Family in the Area | 14.3% | 33.3% | 28.6% | 75.0% |
| % with Relatives in Thai Camps | 42.9% | 77.8% | 28.6% | 75.0% |
| % with Relatives in Laos | 57.1% | 55.6% | 85.7% | 25.0% |
| % with Relatives in Laotian Prison | 28.6% | 11.1% | 14.3% | 25.0% |

## HOUSING

| | All | Wht.Hm. | Gr.Hm. | Male | Female | <30 Yrs. | 30 - 39 | 40+ Yrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean No. of Bedrooms | 2.9 | 2.8 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 2.5 | 2.9 | 2.6 | 3.3 |
| Mean Mo. Housing Costs | $420.62 | $417.25 | $431.83 | $469.67 | $310.25 | $450.00 | $365.00 | $450.11 |
| % in Single Family Housing | 25.9% | 23.8% | 33.3% | 31.6% | 12.5% | 33.3% | 11.1% | 33.3% |
| % that Own Home | 18.5% | 19.0% | 16.7% | 21.1% | 12.5% | 33.3% | 0.0% | 22.2% |
| % that Like Dwelling | 88.9% | 85.7% | 100.0% | 84.2% | 100.0% | 88.9% | 88.9% | 88.9% |
| Why this Dwelling? | | | | | | | | |
| Inexpensive | 51.9% | 47.6% | 66.7% | 47.4% | 62.5% | 33.3% | 66.7% | 55.6% |
| Other Hmong | 11.1% | 14.3% | 0.0% | 10.5% | 12.5% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 11.1% |
| Close to Work | 14.8% | 14.3% | 16.7% | 15.8% | 12.5% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 22.2% |
| Nice Neighborhood | 22.2% | 23.8% | 16.7% | 26.3% | 12.5% | 44.4% | 11.1% | 11.1% |

| | No Educ. | Some Lao | Some U.S.H.S. | U.S.H.S. Grad. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean No. of Bedrooms | 2.3 | 3.3 | 3.1 | 2.8 |
| Mean Mo. Housing Costs | $180.29 | $538.00 | $518.67 | $430.00 |
| % in Single Family Housing | 0.0% | 33.3% | 42.9% | 25.0% |
| % that Own Home | 0.0% | 22.2% | 28.6% | 25.0% |
| % that Like Dwelling | 100.0% | 77.8% | 100.0% | 75.0% |
| Why this Dwelling? | | | | |
| Inexpensive | 71.4% | 44.4% | 57.1% | 25.0% |
| Other Hmong | 28.6% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 25.0% |
| Close to Work | 0.0% | 33.3% | 0.0% | 25.0% |
| Nice Neighborhood | 0.0% | 22.2% | 42.9% | 25.0% |

LOCATION

| | All | Wht.Hm. | Gr.Hm. | Male | Female | <30 Yrs. | 30 - 39 | 40+ Yrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean No. Dwellings lived in in Denver-Boulder | 3.4 | 3.3 | 3.7 | 3.3 | 3.8 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.6 |
| Mean No. Family in Colo. | 1.4 | 1.5 | 1.0 | 1.3 | 1.6 | 0.4 | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| % First Settled in D.-B. | 59.3% | 61.9% | 50.0% | 57.9% | 62.5% | 44.4% | 66.7% | 66.7 |
| % that have Lived Other Places Besides Where 1st Settled and Here | 29.6% | 23.8% | 50.0% | 36.8% | 12.5% | 33.3% | 33.3% | 22.2% |
| % with Other Hmong in Neighborhood | 92.6% | 100.0% | 66.7% | 89.5% | 100.0% | 88.9% | 100.0% | 88.9% |
| % that Plan Permanent Stay in Colorado | 51.9% | 47.6% | 66.7% | 52.6% | 50.0% | 55.6% | 44.4% | 55.6% |
| % that Receive Welfare | 22.2% | 9.5% | 66.7% | 15.8% | 37.5% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 44.4% |
| % that Receive Food Stamps | 14.8% | 9.5% | 33.3% | 5.3% | 37.5% | 0.0% | 11.1% | 33.3% |
| % with Relatives in Other States | 66.7% | 71.4% | 50.0% | 73.7% | 50.0% | 77.8% | 66.7% | 55.6% |

| | No Educ. | Some Lao | Some U.S.H.S. | U.S.H.S. Grad. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean No. Dwellings lived in in Denver-Boulder | 3.6 | 3.2 | 3.4 | 3.5 |
| Mean No. Family in Colo. | 1.9 | 1.1 | 1.9 | 0.5 |
| % First Settled in D.-B. | 71.4% | 55.6% | 57.1% | 50.0% |
| % that have Lived Other Places Besides Where 1st Settled and Here | 28.6% | 22.2% | 57.1% | 0.0% |
| % with Other Hmong in Neighborhood | 100.0% | 88.9% | 85.7% | 100.0% |
| % that Plan Permanent Stay in Colorado | 71.4% | 33.3% | 71.4% | 25.0% |
| % that Receive Welfare | 42.9% | 22.2% | 14.3% | 0.0% |
| % that Receive Food Stamps | 42.9% | 11.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| % with Relatives in Other States | 42.9% | 77.8% | 85.7% | 50.0% |

ACCULTURATION

| | All | Wht.Hm. | Gr.Hm. | Male | Female | <30 Yrs. | 30 - 39 | 40+ Yrs. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Acculturation Score | 10.6 | 10.5 | 10.8 | 10.6 | 10.5 | 11.8 | 9.9 | 10.0 |
| Should Hmong Try to Be More Like Americans? | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 44.4% | 47.6% | 33.3% | 52.6% | 25.0% | 33.3% | 55.6% | 44.4% |
| No | 7.4% | 9.5% | 0.0% | 10.5% | 0.0% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 0.0% |
| Unsure | 48.1% | 42.9% | 66.7% | 36.8% | 75.0% | 55.6% | 33.3% | 55.6% |
| Will Hmong Traditions Be Able to Continue in U.S.? | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 44.4% | 47.6% | 33.3% | 47.4% | 37.5% | 33.3% | 44.4% | 55.6% |
| No | 29.6% | 28.6% | 33.3% | 26.3% | 37.5% | 44.4% | 11.1% | 33.3% |
| Unsure | 25.9% | 23.8% | 33.3% | 26.3% | 25.0% | 22.2% | 44.4% | 11.1% |
| Is Life Better than 3-4 Years Ago? | | | | | | | | |
| Better | 81.5% | 81.0% | 83.3% | 84.2% | 75.0% | 100.0% | 77.8% | 66.7% |
| Same | 11.1% | 14.3% | 0.0% | 5.3% | 25.0% | 0.0% | 22.2% | 11.1% |
| Worse | 7.4% | 4.8% | 16.7% | 10.5% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 22.2% |
| % that Would Like to Visit Laos | 88.9% | 90.5% | 83.3% | 89.5% | 87.5% | 100.0% | 77.8% | 88.9% |
| % that Would Like to Move Back to Laos | 37.0% | 47.6% | 0.0% | 42.1% | 25.0% | 11.1% | 55.6% | 44.4% |
| Satisfaction with Life: | | | | | | | | |
| Satisfied | 44.4% | 42.9% | 50.0% | 47.4% | 37.5% | 66.7% | 33.3% | 33.3% |
| Somewhat Satisfied | 18.5% | 19.0% | 16.7% | 10.5% | 37.5% | 11.1% | 11.1% | 33.3% |
| Unsure | 14.8% | 14.3% | 16.7% | 21.1% | 0.0% | 22.2% | 22.2% | 0.0% |
| Dissatisfied | 22.2% | 23.8% | 16.7% | 21.1% | 25.0% | 0.0% | 33.3% | 33.3% |
| Expectations for Future: | | | | | | | | |
| Very Good | 18.5% | 19.0% | 16.7% | 21.1% | 12.5% | 33.3% | 11.1% | 11.1% |
| Good | 14.8% | 9.5% | 33.3% | 15.8% | 12.5% | 22.2% | 22.2% | 0.0% |
| Moderately Good | 3.7% | 4.8% | 0.0% | 5.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 0.0% | 11.1% |
| Unsure | 63.0% | 66.7% | 50.0% | 57.9% | 75.0% | 44.4% | 66.7% | 77.8% |

ACCULTURATION (CONTINUED)

| | No Educ. | Some Lao | Some U.S.H.S. | U.S.H.S. Grad. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Mean Acculturation Score | 9.6 | 10.0 | 11.8 | 11.3 |
| Should Hmong Try to Be More Like Americans? | | | | |
| Yes | 42.9% | 44.4% | 57.1% | 25.0% |
| No | 0.0% | 11.1% | 0.0% | 25.0% |
| Unsure | 57.1% | 44.4% | 42.9% | 50.0% |
| Will Hmong Traditions Be Able to Continue in U.S.? | | | | |
| Yes | 42.9% | 44.4% | 57.1% | 25.0% |
| No | 28.6% | 22.2% | 28.6% | 50.0% |
| Unsure | 28.6% | 33.3% | 14.3% | 25.0% |
| Is Life Better than 3-4 Years Ago? | | | | |
| Better | 57.1% | 77.8% | 100.0% | 100.0% |
| Same | 28.6% | 11.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Worse | 14.3% | 11.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| % that Would Like to Visit Laos | 85.7% | 88.9% | 85.7% | 100.0% |
| % that Would Like to Move Back to Laos | 42.9% | 44.4% | 28.6% | 25.0% |
| Satisfaction with Life: | | | | |
| Satisfied | 28.6% | 33.3% | 57.1% | 75.0% |
| Somewhat Satisfied | 28.6% | 22.2% | 14.3% | 0.0% |
| Unsure | 0.0% | 11.1% | 28.6% | 25.0% |
| Dissatisfied | 42.9% | 33.3% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Expectations for Future: | | | | |
| Very Good | 14.3% | 0.0% | 14.3% | 75.0% |
| Good | 14.3% | 0.0% | 42.9% | 0.0% |
| Moderately Good | 0.0% | 11.1% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Unsure | 71.4% | 88.9% | 42.9% | 25.0% |